



THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM
From the portrait by Rubens, Gallery Uffizi, Florence
Photo: Anderson

BUCKINGHAM

1592—1628

by

M. A. GIBB



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The Armorial Bearings reproduced on the cover are taken from a copy of the Duke of Buckingham's Garter Plate.

P R E F A C E

PERHAPS none of the friends of the Stuart Kings has been so frequently and thoroughly misunderstood as George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the great favourite of both James I and Charles I. In the following pages, whilst not endeavouring to excuse his mistakes, I have tried to explain his actions, to show that he was not the altogether vicious and irresponsible being some historians have represented him, and to re-create something of that charming personality — the 'Steenie' who captivated the affections of two succeeding English kings.

My aim has been to tell an interesting story, and so I have avoided holding up the flow of the narrative by copious references. My authority is cited only in cases where I have given a quotation from the source, or where the point is one of especial importance. The sources I have used are all printed, and are described in the short note at the end, which I think will be found more interesting than a mere list of books.

There is a wealth of material upon this subject, and a careful selection was necessary to bring the story within its present limits. I have had to deal with topics upon which volumes might be written, and can only apologize beforehand for any omissions I may have made, reminding the reader of the necessity, in a biography, of keeping the light always focused upon the central figure.

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BUCKINGHAM

1592—1628

THE RISING STAR

It was Wednesday, August 3rd, 1614. The village of Apthorpe in Northamptonshire was ablaze with the red jackets of huntsmen and echoed to the deep voices of the hounds. Onlookers expected to see no ordinary hunt, for King James I and his court were visiting Apthorpe Hall, the stately mansion of Sir Anthony Mildmay. It was well known that Sir Anthony had excelled himself in the splendid entertainment he had offered to the King on his first visit, so perhaps this accounted for the fact that the Hall had come to be one of the royal guest's favourite places of sojourn during his frequent progresses. The hunting here was splendid, whilst sumptuous banquets and masques would later in the day minister to the delights of a pleasure-loving court.

A new-comer to court circles drank in eagerly all the life and excitement which was seething around him. He was a young man in the early twenties, tall, slender, and gracefully proportioned. His soft, dark hair, curling to the shoulder after the prevailing fashion, formed a perfect frame for his handsome oval face, with its laughing eyes. The mouth, on closer examination, might reveal unsuspected lines of determination, but to-day, at any rate, this young man was noticed by his fellows for his merry and amiable disposition. George Villiers was his name — a name so soon to be famous. He was the young son of a Leicestershire family of very ancient lineage.

Now King James was, unfortunately, not blessed by any remarkable beauty of form or countenance. We are told

he had a thin, ungainly figure, a scraggy beard, and a tongue altogether too large for his mouth. When he became excited he gabbled and stuttered, and showed a painful lack of that regal dignity which his rank required. But his own physical defects did not prevent him from having an almost fanatical passion for beauty of face and figure in others. So James had not been long at Apthorpe before his quick eye singled out the brilliant young George Villiers for special attention. We have no record of the first words spoken between the two, but George was well travelled, and had a pleasing speech, a merry wit and a ringing laugh which would go straight to the King's heart. 'Ere long James was calling his new acquaintance by the most endearing appellation the royal huntsman could devise — his 'kinde dogge Steenie'. The nickname 'Steenie' was a scotticism for Stephen, for James fancied that he saw in George's handsome features a resemblance to the beautiful St. Stephen, a miniature representation of whom was in his possession.

Fortune was all on the side of the young Villiers, for he could not have met the King at a more propitious moment. The reigning favourite in James's affections was one Robert Carr, a Scottish lad of humble birth, promoted by reason of his good looks and dashing personality to the high rank of Earl of Somerset, who had for some time been one of the most powerful figures in the realm. The Scottish favourite had long been envied and disliked by a certain section of the English nobility, and at this very moment a powerful court faction plotted his overthrow. Obviously, one of the most effective methods of achieving their end lay in the setting up of a new idol in James's affections — thus 'driving out one nail by using another'. It seemed more than likely that the handsome youth who had attracted the King at Apthorpe would provide the new interest. They saw

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nothing but amiability and generosity in his engaging nature, and what they could discover about his birth and mode of life up to the present was all in his favour.

He was the second son of a Sir George Villiers, who had lived at Brookesby in Leicestershire, and whose family could claim undisputed Norman descent. His mother was Mary Beaumont, a gentlewoman who had fallen so far in fortune as to have to serve in the capacity of maid-in-waiting to one of her own kin. In this office she was singled out by Sir George, who was attracted by her remarkable beauty. He married her, and on August 20th,¹ 1592, she bore him this son George, who grew more handsome with each succeeding year, and whose grace and suppleness of body were the envy of his brothers and comrades. The boy learnt the rudiments of education in his birthplace until he reached the age of ten, when he was sent to school in the neighbouring town of Billesden. His father died whilst he was young, and his education was left to the care of his mother, who quickly perceived that he had no studious inclination. So, perhaps in the hope of a brilliant future for him at court, she chose to have him endowed with a readiness of conversation, and such accomplishments as fencing and dancing, which might later stand him in good stead. So greatly did he excel in these lessons, we are told, that his teachers were obliged to restrain him, lest he should altogether discourage his brothers, who were by no means so proficient.

George was always his mother's favourite, and she spent almost all her small income in providing him with the type of experience which would benefit him in a court career.

¹ In SIR HENRY WOTTON'S 'Life and Death of George Villiers' (printed in vol. v of the *Harleian Miscellany*, p. 30), the date of his birth is given as August 28th, 1592 (p. 308). But, in speaking of his death—which took place on August 23rd, 1628—Wotton states distinctly, 'Thus died this great peer, in the 36th year of his age, and three days over' (p. 321). It would seem, therefore, that Wotton originally gave the date of Villiers's birth as August 20th, and that it was afterwards erroneously printed as August 28th.

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At that period, no youth's education was complete without foreign travel, and so at the age of eighteen George went, in the company of John Eliot, to pay a lengthy visit to France. He spent three years in that country, learning the language and picking up many mannerisms which helped to enhance his particular charm. He acquired knowledge and experience, and came back with an added poise and self-confidence which delighted his ambitious mother. So dearly did she love this favourite son that she kept him with her at Goodby for another year. Finally, the attraction of a lovely lady, the daughter of Sir Roger Ashton, Gentleman of the Bedchamber to King James, took him to London to try his fortune.

In London George fell into the company of an experienced courtier, Sir John Graham, a Gentleman of His Majesty's Privy Chamber, who foresaw fortune in his face, and dissuaded him from a marriage which could never make him illustrious, urging him to 'woo fortune in court',¹ advice which appealed strongly to young Villiers. And so we find him at Apthorpe, where his natural charm and careful training won him the reward of the King's immediate attention.

George's early days at court must have been a time of great anxiety for his mother, who had exhausted her resources in providing for him up to the present. Her position, and that of her family, would be precarious should this brilliant son fail to make his mark. He was fortunate in having on his side such powerful patrons as the Earl of Pembroke, who, we are told, was even obliged to furnish him with the clothes his court career demanded. Villiers had only recently been seen at a horse race in Cambridgeshire 'in an old black suit broken out in divers places',² and

¹ WORTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Miscellany*, v, p. 309.

² SIMONDS D'EWES, *Autobiography*, i, p. 166.

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it was said that upon that same night he had not been able to afford a proper bed at an inn. According to a contemporary, he was 'driven to borrowing from everyone piecemeal to put him forward for King's favourite'.¹ It would seem from this evidence that Villiers was very low in funds at the moment of his introduction at court and badly needed one of the lucrative posts which his friends hoped to obtain for him.

Their efforts to secure him a position in the Royal Bed-chamber, during the November of 1614, had been frustrated by the Earl of Somerset, who was cut to the heart at the thought of a rival occupying his place in the King's affections, and used every means in his power to retard the advancement of young George Villiers. His influence with James was still strong, and, approaching the King, he obtained the vacancy for one of his own nephews. But Villiers did not go unbeneficed. The less important office of Cupbearer was given to him, and turned out to be more to his advantage than the most optimistic of his supporters had dared hope.

James could not fail to be impressed by the ready talk and great personal charm of this new attendant who, in his capacity of Cupbearer, was necessarily much in the royal presence. The youth's intelligent comments and amusing reminiscences — for he had a store of merry anecdotes culled from his recent experiences in France — fascinated the King and the assembled company. After a while, James himself began to create opportunities for admitting Villiers into the conversation which usually accompanied the royal meals, and noticed, with a growing delight, that this handsome young man, for whom he was already beginning to feel a more than ordinary affection, seemed to find equal popularity with a large section of the court.

¹ *Aulicus Coquinariae*, p. 258.

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In the April of 1615 several influential noblemen — amongst whom were the Earls of Bedford, Pembroke and Hertford — gave a magnificent private entertainment at Baynard's Castle, where plans were discussed for the further advancement of Villiers. It was on this occasion that one of the guests, on his way to the supper, by way of showing his contempt for Somerset, ordered his footman to fling mud upon a portrait of the Earl which chanced to be hanging outside a picture stall in Fleet Street. At the supper, we are told, was formed the design for bringing Villiers more definitely to the King's notice. It was decided that Archbishop Abbot, who was taking a most paternal interest in the young Cupbearer, should approach the Queen with a view to securing her co-operation.

It is to the pen of the Archbishop that we owe the interesting account of Villiers's next steps in his rise to fortune. Apparently, with a great deal of masculine guile, James insisted that his favourites should be recommended to him, in the first instance, by the Queen, so that afterwards, should occasion for complaint arise, he could remind her that it was she who was responsible for the introduction. Accordingly, Abbot approached Anne upon the subject of securing a knighthood for Villiers, and found her strangely reluctant. She had been badly bitten by favourites in both Scotland and England, and foresaw disagreeable consequences should they decide to advance this young man. The Archbishop argued with her that the change of favourites would most certainly be for the better. 'George is of a good nature,' he told her, and urged that he did not show any signs of that covetousness displayed by Somerset. Already, on many occasions, he had performed for thanks alone those services for which Somerset demanded payment. It was in vain that the Queen protested that they were all preparing a scourge for their

backs. 'I know your master better than you all,' she told Abbot, 'for if this young man be once brought in, the first persons that he will plague must be you that labour for him. The King will teach him to despise and hardly intreat us all that he may seem to be beholden to none but himself.'¹

How far her words were true, only time could show, but at the moment her counsels were overridden, and on St. George's Day, 1615, the Queen and Prince Charles presented themselves in the King's bedchamber, instructions having been given to Villiers to be near at hand. When the Queen saw her opportunity he was called in, and she, asking the Prince for his sword, knelt before the King and humbly prayed him to do her that special favour 'to knight this noble gentleman, whose name is George, in honour of George, whose feast is now kept'.² The King's ready concession leads us to the conclusion that he was well informed of the proposal beforehand, and that the whole affair was one of those elaborate inventions which delighted his heart.

On the same day, Villiers was appointed Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and received a grant of one thousand pounds a year for the better support of his new position. His foot seemed firmly planted upon the ladder of success. His 'adopted father', Archbishop Abbot, displayed the keenest interest in the fortunes of his young protégé, and at the end of 1615 wrote him a most affectionate letter of advice. It was addressed 'to my very loving son, Sir George Villiers', and exhorted him to do his best to act conscientiously in the important role which had been given him. 'I charge you as my son,' said Abbot, 'to be diligent and pleasing to your master, and to be wary that at no man's instance you press him with many suits, because they are

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 456.

² *Ibid.*

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not your friends who urge these things on you, but have private ends of their own which are not fit for you.'¹ Excellent counsel, could the young favourite but have managed to follow it, and to realize that in the crowd of greedy sycophants, so soon to flock around him, there was not one who would be a real friend in an hour of crisis.

Although Villiers had advanced in the royal favour, the King still retained much of his old affection for Somerset, and would have liked to see the establishment of a friendship between him and the younger man, which led him to suggest to Villiers that he might gain much from the patronage of Somerset. The latter had no cause to love Villiers, and up to the present the relationship between them had been of the coolest. But in obedience to the King's desire, Villiers now approached the Earl in a friendly spirit, only to have his overtures insolently rejected. Somerset's reply was frank enough — 'I will none of your service, and you shall none of my favour. I will, if I can, break your neck, and of that be confident.'²

It is amazing how eagerly, at this period, the position of favourite was coveted. It carried no shameful stigma, it was worth endless struggle and intrigue, and once attained, had all the public recognition of a high office of state. But to be a fallen favourite was nothing short of a catastrophe. By the beginning of 1616, it seemed that this was to be the fate of Somerset, who was accused — rightly or wrongly will probably never be known — of being involved in the Borgian drama of the Overbury murder.³ In spite of his vigorous protests of innocence, his downfall was forecast. All eyes were turned to Villiers as the rising star.

From this point, James began to heap honours upon him

¹ GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, I, p. 160.

² SIR ANTHONY WELDON, *Court and Character of King James*, p. 98.

³ See 'Truth brought to Light by Time', in SOMERS' *Tracts*, II, p. 304.

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with bewildering rapidity. On New Year's Day, 1616, by way of a seasonal gift he bestowed on him the high office of Master of the Horse. In the May following — which saw the trial of Somerset — Villiers was received into the most noble order of the Knights of the Garter, and granted more lands to maintain the increased dignity. Rumour had it that should Somerset sink in the disgrace which threatened him, his lands at Sherborne were destined for the rising favourite. At this moment, however, Villiers developed an alarming illness which was suspiciously like smallpox, a disease widely prevalent at that period. Rumours spread abroad like wildfire that the new favourite's good looks would be spoiled and his place in the King's affections irretrievably lost. But fortune did not desert her favourite, the illness turned out to be quite innocuous, and Villiers continued to advance further and further in the regard of his royal master.

Neither could Anne of Denmark resist for long the winning ways of her husband's favourite. She capitulated entirely to his gay and courteous manners, and came to regard him as a personal friend. During the August of 1616 James was again on progress, and at the end of the month Anne was at Woodstock awaiting his arrival. Whilst this rendezvous was in anticipation she wrote to Villiers, then in attendance upon the King, in very familiar strain, concluding with the assurance that 'she would do him any service in her power'.¹ Another remarkable letter from Anne to the young favourite comments, with astonishing familiarity, upon his increasing influence with the King. 'My Kind Dog,' she begins, using James's favourite form of address, 'you do very well in lugging the sowe's eare,² and I thank you for it, and would have you do so still, upon condition that you continue a watchful dog to him and be

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 100.

² The King's.

always true to him. So wishing you all happiness . . .¹ Villiers had secured a powerful ally.

About this time, too, the foundations of a more significant friendship were laid. The King's only surviving son,² Charles, was a shy, reserved youth, not prone to making easy acquaintances, and at first seems to have cordially disliked his father's new favourite. On one occasion James had to box his ears for turning a water spout upon the splendidly immaculate figure of Villiers! At other times, it is recorded, the Prince and the favourite exchanged hot words, and once, during an altercation at tennis, Villiers raised his hand as if to strike Charles. The reasons for this early antipathy are not difficult to find, and more probably resulted from the Prince's character, which in the course of a lonely childhood had developed bewildering complexities, than from Villiers, who could have no possible motive for alienating his future sovereign.

Charles's early years had been spent in the contemplation of excellencies in others, which it seemed that he was destined never to achieve. He was a very delicate child, and few expected that he would ever reach manhood. A slight impediment in his speech rendered him tongue-tied and painfully sensitive in the presence of his fellows. On the other hand, Elizabeth and Henry, his sister and brother, were as healthy and normal as could be desired. Charles adored his sister, and developed a strong hero worship for Henry, whom he loved to watch displaying the virile glory of his young manhood in the tennis court or the tilting yard. One day, the young Charles would tell himself, he would conquer his weakly limbs and do likewise. There was no trace of bitterness or jealousy, however, in his feelings towards the brother who was so far above him, but merely

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 101.

² His elder son Henry had died of a fever in 1612.

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a rather pathetic desire for a little devotion in return for all the love he was ready to pour out. One of the earliest letters Charles ever wrote is a curiously pitiful little note offering to give Henry any of his toys if only he will love him in return.¹ From childhood, evidently, Charles had a sensitive nature which would never thrive amid the hubbub of the crowded court, but would rather seek out some strong, determined personality about whom its tendrils might be entwined. Yet, after Henry had died, and Elizabeth married, poor 'Baby Charles', as they had called him, seemed destined to loneliness. His father was usually in the grip of his favourites, who had seldom appealed to the shy young prince. On Villiers's first appearance at court, as we may well imagine, the contrast Charles saw between this tall, handsome, self-assured young man and himself—inexperienced, shy and already showing signs of attaining no great stature—must have made him ready to hate his father's new favourite. Villiers, however, had no desire for the Prince's hatred and laid himself out to captivate Charles's affections. Soon Charles succumbed completely to the winning ways and easy charm of Villiers, and began to see in him a possible friend. Gradually he conceived an affection for 'Steenie', as he was soon calling him, which came to fill his whole horizon. To him he transferred that passionate devotion he had felt for Elizabeth and the hero worship he had given Henry. After a while Damon and Pythias were not more dear to each other than 'Baby Charles' and his 'Sweet Steenie'. It was a friendship which was to bear significant fruit in the years to come.

Secure in the affections of King, Queen and Prince, and backed by a large section of the court who hoped, no doubt, for good things from this charming and apparently amiable youth, Villiers continued to advance apace. On August

¹ See ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 92.

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27th, 1616, in the presence of the Queen and the Prince, the young Sir George, splendidly attired in a coat of red velvet, was brought before His Majesty by the Earl of Suffolk and Viscount Lisle. James thereupon honoured him with the dual dignity of Baron Whaddon and Viscount Villiers.

All the talk at court was now of the rising fortunes of young Villiers. It was generally admitted to be a noble gesture when he refused the offer of Sherborne,¹ part of the estate of the fallen favourite, praying the King that his fortunes should not be built upon the ruins of another's. James took care that this magnanimity should not be the means of impoverishing his favourite, and lands to the value of £80,000 were granted him in lieu of Sherborne. Now men began to whisper of an Earldom for him, and conjectures were rife as to what it would be.

Speculations were turned into certainty on January 5th, 1617, when, with little preliminary notice, in the Presence Chamber at Whitehall, Sir George Villiers became the Earl of Buckingham. The handsome young Earl must have looked very splendid as he stood before his royal master, in his robes and coronet, after his investiture. It was a high dignity to have attained at the early age of twenty-four, but James's bounty knew no limit once he had started to bestow favours.

By now, Villiers had become an indispensable companion and servant to the King, and seldom was James to be seen without his 'Steenie'. In the presence of foreign ambassadors he would pull his hair and kiss him, and the handsome youth was always at the King's right hand during their audiences. So that there was little astonishment when,

¹ There is an opinion that Villiers was influenced by a current superstition that ill fortune attended the possessors of this estate, in consequence of a curse pronounced by an early Bishop of Salisbury on all who should presume to possess it in defiance of the rights of the see. *Vide GARDINER, III, p. 30.*

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in February, 1617, James decided to make his position official and advanced him to the rank of Privy Councillor. It was said that Villiers was the youngest who had ever sat at that board. About this time he commenced the policy, which he was afterwards to pursue with too much diligence, of securing the advancement of his own family. His mother — now married to Sir Thomas Compton — worked strenuously with him in this direction. Already she had eyes on a brilliant match to be secured through George's influence for his elder brother John. Christopher, Buckingham's younger brother, was given the important post of Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and court rhymsters began to publish such doggerel verses as the following:

Above in the skies shall Gemini rise,
And twins the court shall fester,
George shall back his brother Jack
And Jack his brother Kester.¹

Gradually Buckingham's patronage was becoming increasingly powerful, and yet for a while his charm and amiability made him loved by a large section of the court. He gave no great encouragement to those who sought to bribe him, for his liberal allowance of £15,000 a year satisfied him at the moment. For money alone he never showed any strong degree of covetousness. But it was more than imprudent for James to have placed the virtual direction of affairs in the hands of one so inexperienced. Charming as Buckingham might be in the role of courtier, it would take years of patient study and experience to fill the important position in the government of the state which was now thrust upon him. To do him full justice, it was a creditable desire to serve his master to the best of his ability which led him to apply again and again to the

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of King James I*, III, p. 244.

experienced statesman and philosopher, Sir Francis Bacon, now Lord Keeper, for advice. Bacon was keenly interested in the young favourite, and thought he saw in him a means of lifting the government of the realm to higher planes than those in which it had recently moved. In reply to the request of young Villiers, Bacon wrote a letter outlining for him the best method of procedure in almost any contingency which might confront him. This remarkable epistle touched upon the conduct of affairs in every department of state, and endeavoured to steer the young favourite through the dangerous shoals of court intrigue. There was a word of warning for Buckingham, whose accession to fortune had been so rapid. 'You are as a new risen star,' declared the wise old minister, 'the eyes of all men are upon you; let not your negligence make you fall like a meteor.' He commended the favourite's desire to serve his master honestly, and offered him advice as to how to fill his peculiar position: — 'You are not only a courtier, but a bed-chamber man, and so are in the eye and ear of your master, but you are also a favourite, the favourite of the time, and so are in his bosom also (For Kings and great princes have had their friends, their favourites, their privadoes in all ages: for they have their affections as well as other men) . . . I am convinced His Majesty hath cast his eyes upon you, as finding you to be such as you should be, or hoping to make you such as he would have you be; for this I may say, without flattery, your outside promiseth as much as can be expected from a gentleman.' In conclusion Buckingham was advised to deal justly and summarily with the throng of suitors who were sure to pester him for favours. To James he was to be 'a good angel and guide him, and be not a malus genius against him'.¹ Unfortunately, the extreme adulation which James was now

¹ CABALA, p. 37; SPEDDING, *Letters and Life of Sir Francis Bacon*, vi, p. 27.

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giving to his favourite was such as might have turned a wiser head than Buckingham's. With his royal master doting upon him and inclining his ear to his counsels alone, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Buckingham to remember such sane advice as Bacon had just offered.

In the March of 1617 James decided that he would pay a visit to his native land, and began his progress northward with the spring, 'warming the country as he went with the glories of his court; taking such recreations by the way as best might beguile the days and make them shorter but lengthen the nights. There was hawking, hunting and horse racing by day, with feasting, masquing and dancing by night.'¹ Naturally James was accompanied by Buckingham, whom he could scarcely bear out of his sight, and whose splendid accomplishments as a courtier would wile away many a weary hour for his royal master.

In Scotland Buckingham's winning manners captivated all hearts, and the new favourite was surprisingly popular, considering the fact that he had so recently displaced one of Scottish nationality. But few could resist him when he set out to be charming, and during this visit, we are told, 'he did carry himself with singular sweetness and temper'. Apparently, he was continually in the intimate company of James, for his letters to Bacon, who had not accompanied the court, reveal close knowledge of the King's personal well-being. On the eighteenth of April he wrote that 'His Majesty, though he were a little troubled with a little pain in his back, which hindered his hunting, is now, God be thanked, very well and as merry as ever he was'. Two months later, he reported from Edinburgh that 'His Majesty, God be thanked, is very well and safely returned from his hunting'.²

¹ WILSON, *Life and Reign of James I*, p. 708.

² NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 255.

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On June 3rd news reached England that more honour had been heaped upon the Earl of Buckingham, who had been sworn of the Scottish Privy Council. Four days afterwards Scotland had proof of his high favour with the King, for, in the royal state procession to the Parliament at Edinburgh, there was 'not an English Lord on horseback but my Lord of Buckingham, who waited upon the King's stirrup'.¹

During Buckingham's absence in Scotland, his mother was exerting all her efforts at home to secure a brilliant marriage for his brother, John. Many private fortunes were destined to be entwined in the tangled skein of events which now ensued, and those at court were to have a taste of the increasing omnipotence of Buckingham. The trouble started when Sir John Villiers — who did not share his brother's personal charm — elected to fall in love with Frances, the beautiful young daughter of Sir Edward Coke. The latter, smarting under the double humiliation of dismissal from the Council Table and from his office of Chief Justice, saw in the proposed match a heaven-sent opportunity for his reinstatement. His wife, however, did not share his ambitions and was determined that an obnoxious marriage should not be forced upon her daughter. Sir Edward wrote to Buckingham and secured his approval and assurance of support in the proposed match, and the negotiations proceeded. Lady Compton, Buckingham's mother, nearly upset the whole affair by commencing to haggle miserably over the marriage portion to accompany the girl. At first Coke refused to pay the sum of £10,000 which she demanded, but apparently reflected that he could not buy the favourite's support too dear and decided to accept her terms.

The affair now came to the ears of Sir Francis Bacon,

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 345.

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who saw in it merely an attempt on the part of Coke to regain his lost positions by playing upon Buckingham's family affections. Since the King and the Earl were both absent, he presented his views to the Secretary of State, Sir Ralph Winwood, who was, it transpired, hotly in favour of Coke. An open quarrel between the Secretary and the Lord Keeper resulted, news of which reached the ears of James and Buckingham in a grossly distorted form. The latter, whose relations with Bacon had so far been most cordial, underwent a sharp revulsion of feeling on hearing that the Lord Keeper was apparently crossing his wishes.

Events were quickened by the action of Lady Hatton, Coke's wife, who, pretending that her daughter was already contracted to the Earl of Oxford — he being safely out of the way in Italy — carried her off to a place of safety. Coke applied to Bacon for a warrant to recover his daughter and was refused. At the same time Bacon wrote to Buckingham advising him strongly against supporting the match or allowing his brother to marry into a family where such domestic strife existed. In the meantime Sir Edward Coke had taken the law into his own hands and with his son, 'fighting Clem Coke', and about a dozen servants, burst open the door of the house where his daughter was lodged and carried her off in his coach.

The last act in the drama took place when all the principal actors were brought up before the Council, and the young lady was sent to the house of the Attorney-General. By July 18th some sort of an agreement had been reached between her parents and she was sent to Hatton House, with orders that the Lady Compton and her son should have access to 'win and wear her'.¹

For a week London court circles had buzzed with the

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of James I*, I, p. 24.

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gossip of these events, and the news which reached Buckingham in Scotland produced in him a mood which was far from amiable. The responsibility for the Council's interference lay at Bacon's door, and, despite their previous friendship, Buckingham did not hesitate to write angrily to him — 'In this business of my brother's that you over-trouble yourself with,' he curtly declared, 'I understand from London by some of my friends that you have carried yourself with much scorn and neglect both towards myself and my friends.'¹ It seemed now that Buckingham was destined, by his own actions, to lose his friends as soon as they crossed him in any way. This unfortunate trait in his character was no doubt fostered by the attitude of the King who, instead of correcting this fault at the beginning, chose to range himself on Buckingham's side and share his resentments. In excusing his recent conduct to James, Bacon had remarked that his affection for Buckingham was purely parent-like, and that his advice to him had proceeded from a fear that in the height of his fortune the favourite might feel too secure. With cold displeasure the King replied that this attitude could only proceed from jealousy and an inadequate appreciation of Buckingham's discretion. This immoderate affection on the part of James was one of the most dangerous forms of flattery and was already developing in his favourite's hitherto open and lovable disposition a vanity which, like that of the spoilt child, could bear no reverses.

By September the royal court was again in London, and on the 29th the marriage of Sir John Villiers and Frances Coke was celebrated at Hampton Court. The bride was given away by the King himself. Her father was extremely jovial, for on the previous day he had been reinstated at the Council Table. It is said that, on this occasion, James

¹ SPEDDING, *Letters and Life*, vi, p. 237.

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made the following remarkable statement, excusing his own behaviour and his love of his favourite. 'I, James,' he began, 'am neither a god nor an angel, but a man like any other. Therefore, I act like a man, and confess to loving those dear to me more than other men. You may be sure that I love the Earl of Buckingham more than anyone else, and more than you who are here assembled. I wish to speak on my own behalf, and not to have it thought to be a defect, for Jesus Christ did the same and therefore I cannot be blamed. Christ had his John and I have my George.'¹

On the next New Year's Day the King gave a further demonstration of this affection by conferring the high rank of Marquis upon Buckingham, a title which he had not bestowed since his coming to the throne. The creation was carried out privately, by letters patent delivered into Buckingham's own hands, in the presence of a few noblemen, amongst whom was the Lord Keeper, Bacon. Buckingham rarely bore malice, and, following a complete apology, Bacon had been received back into favour. But the old frank relationship between them had been irretrievably destroyed.

It is difficult to convey an adequate impression of how completely Buckingham had come to be the pivot upon which affairs of court and state were to turn. New appointments, the continuance in high positions, all depended upon his favour. Archbishops, Bishops, Judges, Generals, and hosts of small officials daily petitioned him until eventually the press of this business became so overwhelming that he delegated part of it to his brother. At the beginning of 1616 Bacon had warned him that this was bound to happen, and had given him some excellent advice as to how to deal with those who sought his favour. He counselled him never to advance those who were incompetent

¹ GARDINER, III, p. 98.

for their posts merely because they were his creatures. On the contrary, he besought him to countenance in all spheres only those who showed ability. Had Buckingham followed this advice much of his subsequent misfortune might have been averted, but his nature was one that could brook no opposition. Vanity was his cardinal sin, the one trait which ruined a noble and generous nature. Consequently, all important offices he either filled himself or delegated to some incompetent suitor who had secured his favour either by servility or by an opportune marriage with one of his numerous female relatives. This latter method of rising to power had become a scandal in the court, and a contemporary writes, in vitriolic vein, 'Happy is he that can get a kinswoman: it is the next way to thriving offices or some new swelling title. The King, that never cared much for women, had his court swarming with the Marquis's kindred so that little ones would dance up and down the privy lodgings like fairies.'¹

Although he showed little trace of meanness or grasping avarice, the favourite demanded his payment for advancing suitors to high places in something more than money. The fact that he frequently rejected large bribes and advanced one who could, perhaps, afford no bribe at all becomes less noble upon a closer examination. It must be borne in mind that, for the next few years, whenever a vacancy occurred in a post of any importance, James and Buckingham invariably chose the candidate whose views most nearly coincided with their own. Once appointed to the office the nominee was expected to comply absolutely with Buckingham's wishes. Although his ability as a statesman was negligible, the favourite himself had the highest possible conviction of his own wisdom and capacity, and took his task of government much more seriously than

¹ WILSON, *Life and Reign of James*, p. 727.

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is generally realized. But he could never tolerate advice if it ran counter to his own views, and consequently all the talented men of the rising generation — men after the stamp of Wentworth, Pym, Hampden or Eliot — with very decided opinions of their own, were driven to swell the ranks of the opposition. Under such a system the King and his favourite gradually became more and more isolated and, could they but have seen it, had, in their refusal to share responsibility, merely increased the weight of the burden they themselves must carry.

‘THE MAN WHOM THE KING
DELIGHTETH TO HONOUR’

FROM Christmas to Twelfth Night the royal court made merry. This was its high season of festivity, and gaiety was the order of the day — and night. Buckingham’s accession to the dignity of Marquis had taken place amid the usual round of revelry, and for him this season was an especially triumphant one. By day, the young courtiers would spend their time exhibiting their prowess in the tennis court or the tilting yard, and here Buckingham won distinction among his fellows. As he stood bareheaded after such exercise, his eyes flashing and his face flushed, the full beauty of his handsome figure and fresh complexion was clearly displayed. Sir Simonds D’Ewes, watching ‘the beloved Marquis’, as he calls him, on one of these occasions, remarks ‘I saw everything in him full of delicacy and handsome features’.¹

By night there would be banquets, masques and dances, most of them all the livelier for the favourite’s presence. Indeed many a function was saved from dullness by his brilliant dancing. He could take the floor and perform the most intricate steps with all the ease and grace of a born courtier. The court was the stage of his greatness; his elegance and proficiency as a cavalier gave him the star role.

In keeping with his general magnificence, the banquets given by Buckingham were usually expected to be most splendid affairs. And seldom were his guests disappointed. On January 3rd, 1618, to celebrate his recent acquisition

¹ SIMONDS D’EWES, *Autobiography*, I, p. 166.

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of a marquise, Buckingham invited the King and the whole court to a magnificent feast. It was a distinguished gathering, and the general verdict was that even the Marquis had surpassed himself. James could not find sufficient words wherewith to express his high pleasure with both the meat and the master — an unusual state for the royal speechmaker! The supper alone cost six hundred pounds, and was supervised by Sir Thomas Edmondes who, having lately been as ambassador to France, took care that it was as thoroughly French as possible. The extravagance of the banquet may readily be imagined from the tit-bit of information that there were ‘seventeen dozen of pheasants and twelve partridges in a dish throughout’.¹ To express his high degree of pleasure the King rose and proposed the following toast to the assembled company: ‘My Lords, I drink to you all: I know you are all welcome to my George, and he that doth not pledge him with all his heart, I would the devil had him for my part.’²

On Twelfth Night the seasonal festivities were wound up with a masque — the ‘Vision of Delight’ — remarkable chiefly for the fact that here Prince Charles, in the company of Buckingham, appears as a masquer for the first time. The masque was one of the court’s favourite forms of entertainment, being a form of mummerly with all the delightful pageantry of gorgeous scenery, beautiful costumes, rich jewels, and elegant verse. If, as sometimes happened, the poet’s invention should prove rather dull, the general splendour would atone much for his lack of originality. ‘The Revels’ which usually came somewhere near the end of the masque were particularly popular, for here the whole court could accompany the masquers in a general dance. The masques were usually gay, and often brilliant pageants,

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of James I*, I, p. 453.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1611-18, p. 511.

especially where Inigo Jones and Ben Jonson had combined their talents to provide truly royal entertainment. As we may well imagine, Buckingham was passionately fond of these festivities, and almost every masque provided at the royal court, during his presence, saw him taking some part in the production.

In view of the place Buckingham had come to occupy in the King's affections, it seemed futile to plot his overthrow. Yet a band of intriguing courtiers now essayed that very task, with no great success. Towards the end of February, a company of young court gallants, who had been forcing themselves upon James very much of late, suffered a sharp rebuff when the Lord Chamberlain conveyed to their leader, young Monson, the King's message that 'he did not like of his forwardness, and presenting himself so continually about him'.¹ James requested that Monson would forbear the royal presence, but the Lord Chamberlain went further and administered the private advice that he had better forbear the court. So much for the hopes and aspirations of those who had spent their time setting up this new idol, and washing his hands and face with posset curd that his complexion might rival that of Buckingham!

One Saturday night towards the end of June, Buckingham was again giving one of his magnificent banquets. This was a particularly famous occasion, and the supper has come to be known as the 'Friends' Feast' — or sometimes the 'Prince's Feast'. Apparently Prince Charles had offended his father deeply and had sought the powerful intervention of the favourite to bring about a reconciliation. 'I pray you to commend my most humble service to His Majesty,' he begged, 'and tell him I am very sorry to have done anything that may offend him.'² James could refuse

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 468.

² ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, III, p. 102.

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his beloved Marquis practically nothing, Charles was forgiven, and this feast was given specially to cement the reconciliation. The King and the Prince were both present, and between them and Buckingham a kind of triumvirate was established. On this evening was given a further demonstration of the high esteem in which James held his favourite, and the whole family of Villiers. He conferred a great honour upon their house when, at the end of the dinner, he rose and came personally to the table where many of them were seated, and drank a health to the noble family which, he professed, he desired to advance before all others. For himself, he declared, he lived to that end alone, and took this opportunity of commanding his posterity ‘to advance that House above all others whatsoever’.¹

By way of a practical demonstration of these sentiments, Lady Compton, the Marquis’s mother, was raised on July 1st to the dignity of Countess of Buckingham. To the general amusement she refused to share her title with her husband, whom she cordially detested, and he remained a mere knight. The new Countess was very jealous of her power and endeavoured to interfere in all her son’s affairs. James was driven to warn her that her continued meddling could only result in her son’s detriment. ‘Her hand must be in all transactions, both of Church and State,’ writes an annalist, whilst Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, satirically reported to Philip ‘That there was never more hope of England’s conversion to Rome than now; for there are more prayers offered to the mother than the son.’²

As may be imagined, it was now a topic of much speculation at court whether the Marquis would make the great

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of James I*, II, p. 78.

² WILSON, *Life and Reign of James I*, p. 728.

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decision to marry. He had evidently sown his wild oats to some extent, but there seems little reason to conclude from these stories of his youthful indiscretions that he was the licentious monster he has so often been painted. We can be in no doubt that Buckingham liked the ladies, and his handsomeness and charm must have won him many hearts. Such antics as his 'winking and smiling at comely and beautiful young women'¹ during Divine Service, which so greatly disturbed D'Ewes's sense of propriety, seem to us little more than an effervescence of youthful spirits.

There were, apparently, more questionable episodes, but it is dangerous to place too much reliance upon the malicious tales of chroniclers whose bitter anti-royalist views are well known. Such a writer declares venomously that Buckingham, aided and abetted by James, was responsible for the fall from virtue of more than one beautiful maiden.² Another contemporary tells us that Buckingham at this time 'looked upon the whole race of women as inferior things, and used them as if the sex were one, best pleased with all', giving stories of his visits to 'wanton beauties'.³

It is most probable that during these early years the Marquis did have his amours, but they seem to have been managed quite discreetly. Taking into account the licentiousness and immorality of the age, and of James's court in particular, the evidence against Buckingham in this direction is by no means damning, and it is probably through fiction, rather than fact, that later ages have seen in him a vicious, sexual creature. When he did eventually marry, he was to prove a kind husband and father, and his wife loved him devotedly to the end. At this time, how-

¹ SIMONDS D'EWES. *Autobiography*, I, p. 389.

² See *The Divine Catastrophe of the House of Stuart*, by SIR EDWARD PEYTON.

³ WILSON, *Life and Reign of James I*, p. 728. It is significant to notice that these stories are followed by the tale of Buckingham's enticement of Rutland's daughter, for the unreliability of which see below, p. 41.

ever, marriage did not seem to attract him — probably because he knew of the popular impression that the favourite would lose his place in the King’s affections should he have the misfortune to fall in love and marry. In this case, James himself dispelled that illusion by intimating that he wished Buckingham would take a wife, no doubt desiring the honours he had conferred upon his favourite to be perpetuated. At this, great was the angling for such a splendid catch, and in the January of 1619 Lady Hatton gave a magnificent supper party followed by a play. Buckingham was the guest of honour, and the wily hostess had made Diana Cecil, one of Lord Burghley’s daughters, Mistress of the Feast, in the hope that the Marquis might cast an eye of favour upon her. But Buckingham emerged from the festivities quite unimpressed with the great Diana, and it seemed that he was likely to prove but a slippery catch. Finally rumours began to float abroad that the Marquis’s affections had been captivated by the lovely Lady Katherine Manners, daughter of the Earl of Rutland. This, it was whispered, might cause some trouble, for the lady and her family were well known Papists, and the King would certainly never allow his favourite to marry a recusant.

But for the present, at any rate, nothing happened, and it seemed that Buckingham was shy of embarking upon the perilous seas of matrimony.

Meanwhile, his affection for his royal master was on the increase and he accompanied him everywhere, being now virtually one of the royal family. To show his love for the Marquis, James dedicated to him his newly published volume of *Meditations on the Lord’s Prayer*. A more public honour awaited him, and one which was to cause much heartburning among those in high position. At the beginning of 1619 the King had told his favourite that the present Lord High Admiral, the old Earl of Nottingham,

had become utterly incapable of filling his post. He was eighty-three, and his powers were naturally failing him. The administration of the Navy was in a shocking condition, and a programme of reform was long overdue. The King suggested to Buckingham that he should take over the office of Admiral, but at first the Marquis hung back, pleading his youth and inexperience. Eventually he was persuaded into accepting the post by those who told him that his influence with the King would result in the benefit of the Navy. James managed to persuade the old Earl to give up his position, and gave him by way of recompense £3000 in a lump sum, and £1000 a year for the remainder of his life. Loud were the criticisms of Buckingham, who was now, so to speak, 'doubly beneficed',¹ being both Lord High Admiral and Master of the Horse. Yet Buckingham filled this post better than his predecessor had done. Although not able to do much himself, he was not averse to allowing the Navy Commissioners to work hard in the direction of reform. Under the new Navy Commission, competent clerks were employed to go into the details of the administration, much of the unnecessary expenditure was reduced, existing docks were repaired and new ones built, whilst a few extra ships — which were certainly badly needed — were constructed. At the end of the year, when the King visited Deptford to see the two new ships built by the Navy Commissioners, he congratulated the new Admiral who had reduced the naval expenses from £60,000 to £30,000 a year, and yet built two new ships and repaired the old. He called the new ships, to commemorate the occasion, *Buckingham's Entrance* and *Reformation*. The Navy required much more attention, however, than Buckingham could give it. The number of good ships was still hopelessly insufficient, and the hastily impressed mariners with whom

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of James I*, II, p. 133.

they were filled were useless in an encounter and ran away at every opportunity. Willing as Buckingham might be to do his best, the post of Lord High Admiral required, not an inexperienced youth, but an older man well versed in naval administration.

The revenues attendant upon the Marquis's new office were quite considerable, and within a few months his private fortunes received a further strengthening. During the whole of 1618 the Queen's health had been very feeble. Although only forty-five she was suffering from dropsy, and it was the general opinion that she had not long to live. On February 6th, 1619, the King had gone to Newmarket on pleasure, and whilst there was overtaken by a serious illness. He was not fit to be brought to London when, on February 22nd, his wife's condition reached a dangerous climax. On March 1st everyone knew that there was no hope, and Anne herself asked for her son to come to her. At one o'clock the following morning she realized that her end was near and, sending for Charles again, gave him her blessing. At four o'clock she passed away from a world where, politically, she had exercised no influence. Her loss would be more seriously felt in the sphere of court life, where she had pursued her gay round of pleasure. Her husband did not seem to be deeply upset by her death. Indeed, for a few days in early March his own illness had excluded all other considerations, and it was feared that he was dying, following a relapse which had occurred during his visit to a horse race at Newmarket. He sent for Charles, Buckingham and some of the chief nobility, and gave his son his dying commands, recommending him to stand by the faithful Buckingham, also Lord Digby and the Duke of Lennox. But James recovered and June saw him seated in his favourite palace at Theobalds with his feet plunged in the carcass of a newly-killed deer. This, some-

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one had told him, would cure the weakness which still existed in his legs.

During the King's illness Buckingham had never left his master's side, and upon his recovery, James decided to reward his favourite substantially for his assiduous care. As soon as the King had come up to London, the Queen's trunks and cabinets with all her rich jewels were brought from Denmark House to Greenwich to be delivered to James. After examining them, the King bestowed a considerable portion of the jewels upon Buckingham, whose love of precious gems was remarkably strong. In addition, he received the Keepership of Denmark House, the late Queen's residence, and a further gift of £1200 in lands. Court gossip declared that the Marquis might have such grants from James any time he pleased.

At the beginning of 1620 Buckingham was seriously considering marriage with Lady Katherine Manners. Although Katherine was in love with Buckingham and he with her, she was loth to change her religion for any consideration whatsoever. Yet James refused to allow his favourite to marry her unless she would publicly conform to the rites of the English Church, and for a few months now the situation had been at a deadlock. The lady was obdurate. Buckingham's mother had made things worse by commencing a financial bargain with the Earl in her son's interest. Her terms were high — £10,000 in ready money and land to the value of £4000 a year.

These difficulties presented a unique opportunity to one who had been waiting to secure advancement by courting the favour of the Buckinghams. John Williams, the youngest son of a Welsh gentleman, had studied at Cambridge and taken Holy Orders, securing the influence of Bishop Montague for his creation as one of the royal chaplains. His fluent talk had already attracted James,

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and all he needed was the patronage of the favourite to assure his advancement. So he offered his services in the present difficult situation.

The financial dispute became much less acute when Rutland's son died in the March of 1620, which made Katherine his only child. The Earl was now willing to bestow upon his daughter a dowry larger than she would have received during her brother's lifetime. There remained the religious problem, which Williams proceeded to tackle with typical shrewdness. Approaching the lady herself, he essayed her conversion by pointing out to her the beauty of the catechism and the marriage service in the English Prayer Book. He was wise enough not to alienate her by denouncing the doctrines of the Church of Rome or the Headship of the Pope. Eventually Lady Katherine, who was deeply in love with Buckingham, declared that the potent arguments of Williams had converted her and that she was now ready to embrace the Anglican faith.

This apostasy incensed the Earl of Rutland and his fury was only increased by the incident which followed. The story spread abroad that Buckingham, too impatient to wait for his love, tempted her to his lodging at Whitehall and kept her there all night, much to the detriment of the lady's honour.¹ This was the garbled version of the truth which reached the ears of Rutland, but his daughter had quite a different story to tell.² According to her account the Countess of Buckingham called for her on the day in question and the two ladies spent the day together. In the evening Katherine fell ill, so that she could not go home until next morning. The moot point, of which her father refused to be convinced, was that she had spent the night, not with Buckingham, but with his mother.

¹ This is the story told in WILSON, *Life and Reign of James I*, p. 728.

² See *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1619-23, p. 133.

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Rutland was by now thoroughly enraged and considered that his daughter had brought down scandal and disgrace upon her honourable name, first by her desertion of its faith and now by her immodest yielding to her lover's importunity. He vented his indignation upon Buckingham in no measured terms, and, according to an Italian, an open affray was only narrowly prevented by the Prince. After his wrath had cooled a little, the Earl resorted to the channel of correspondence and wrote to Buckingham requesting that the marriage should take place at once in vindication of his daughter's good name. To this letter the Marquis replied scathingly that only her father's unwarranted suspicions threatened the lady's honour. His pride revolted at being spoken to in such a manner, and perhaps, he suggested haughtily, in view of what had taken place, the Earl had better bestow his daughter elsewhere. In conclusion he added — 'I never thought before to have seen the time when I should need to come within the compass of the law by stealing a wife against the consent of her parents, considering the favour that it pleases His Majesty, though undeservedly, to bestow upon me.'¹

The result of all this parley was that Lady Katherine openly conformed to the rites of the Church of England and on May 16th the two were married by Williams. The wedding took place privately at Lumley House, a mansion near Tower Hill, there were no celebrations, and the only guests were the King and the bride's father. As a reward for his services Williams received the Deanery of Westminster.

A splendid setting for his bride had been prepared by Buckingham, who had recently purchased the estate of Burley-on-the-Hill. This mansion he had quickly transformed. Lady Katherine had known the grandeur of

¹ GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, II, p. 191.

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Belvoir Castle, the famous seat of the Earls of Rutland, and the Marquis was determined that her new home should not fall one degree short of the old — if anything, that it should be even more magnificent. His artistic taste quickly turned Burley House into one of the most beautiful dwellings in the country.¹ He had a passion for lovely furnishings, sumptuous hangings and artistic treasures. Throughout his life he spent fabulous sums upon artistic masterpieces, for which his agents were continually scouring the continent. His mansions must have been veritable treasure houses, for many of the pictures in his possession were priceless. We are told that he paid £10,000 for those collected for him by Rubens, with whom he later became very intimate. Sir Henry Wotton, during his residence as ambassador in Venice, procured many splendid treasures for Buckingham. The list of his collection at the time of his death included nineteen pictures by Titian, twenty-one by Bassano, thirteen by Paul Veronese and thirteen by Rubens. It is said that at one time Buckingham refused an offer of £7000 for one magnificent picture, the ‘Ecce Homo’ by Titian. Unfortunately, like so many rare treasures, his valuable collection was lost to England during the Civil Wars,² the greatest part finding its way to the gallery of the Archduke Leopold at Prague.

But as yet Merry England was unshadowed by any Civil Wars, and in the August of 1621 King James was again enjoying one of his frequent progresses, and paying a visit to his favourite in his new home at Burley. As he passed through the rich vale of Catmos to the beautiful mansion, the extreme loveliness of his surroundings must have made

¹ Burley was burnt to the ground by the Parliament forces in 1645.

² Buckingham's son, George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, was compelled by the Parliamentary forces to flee the country in 1648. To obtain money for his support he had to sell his father's pictures — then adorning the walls of York House — at Antwerp. They were conveyed to him by a private servant, Mr. John Traylman. Mr. Duart of Antwerp bought some and the Archduke the rest. See *Biographica Britannica*, vi, p. 4051.

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a strong appeal to the King. The house was perfectly situated, standing high upon the crest of a hill, with a princely park and woods adjoining. Both inside and outside its beauty was remarkable, and James could not sufficiently express the fullness of his admiration.

A Kenilworth-like reception awaited the King. Buckingham had laid himself out to surpass all records, and Ben Jonson had been employed to compose a splendid masque in James's especial honour. Buckingham himself had composed some verses of welcome which were presented to the King, probably in writing, upon his crossing the threshold for the first time. In flattering vein, they expressed Buckingham's appreciation of the honour of this royal visit:

Sir, you have ever shin'd upon me bright,
But now you strike and dazzle me with light,
You, England's radiant Sunne, vouchsafe to grace
My house, a speare too little and too base.
My Burley, as a cabinet, contains
The gemme of Europe, which from golden veins
Of glorious Princes to this height is grown,
And joins their precious virtues all in one.

So delighted was James with this reception that he gave himself up at frequent intervals during the visit to composing fitting verses wherewith he, in turn, might take his adieu.

Jonson's famous Masque of the Metamorphosed Gipsies¹ was presented at Burley on the evening of August 3rd, and won instant success. It expresses this poet in his best vein, and is a remarkable mixture of poetic skill, subtle flattery and apt satire. It was, of course, written with the primary object of flattering the King and pleasing the assembled

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 672.



JAMES I OF ENGLAND

From the portrait by Daniel Mytens in the National Portrait
Gallery

By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

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company, in which Buckingham’s female relatives were well represented.

The main theme of the whole Masque — Buckingham’s gratitude to and appreciation of his royal master — was indicated at once in the opening speech presented to the King by a masquer entering in the character of the Porter. It was an elaborate eulogy of welcome:

Welcome, o Welcome then and enter here
The house your bounty built¹ and still doth rear
With those high favours and those heap’d increases
Which shews a hand not grieved but when it ceases.
The Master is your creature, as the place
And every good about him is your Grace.
Whom, though he stand by silent think not rude,
But as a man turned all to gratitude
For what he ne’er can hope now to restore
Since, while he meditates one you pour one more.

The main characters in the Masque were the eight Gipsies, and their Captain, which part was played by Buckingham himself. After two rousing songs and dances by the Gipsy troupe, the interest turned to fortune telling. With great boldness, the Captain first approached the most exalted member of the audience and, addressing him as though completely ignorant of his identity, besought leave to read his hand. Now, although the masquers were masked, there is no reason to suppose that the audience were likewise disguised, and in thus familiarly approaching the King, Buckingham was behaving in accordance with his supposed character of gipsy, pretending that he could not tell the station of his customer until informed by his chiromantic art. He knew quite well that this little bit of play-acting would thoroughly delight James.

¹ Here the poet refers to the raising up of the Villiers family, and does not allude to the literal building of the house.

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After reading his royal birth in the King's hand, the Captain withdrew for a moment, to reappear, after a third song by a female gipsy, and pursue his fortune. In an elegant address he alluded to James's well-meant endeavours to preserve the peace of the Continent, telling the King that, by his art, he was able:

To see the ways of truth you take
To balance business and to make
All Christian differences cease.
Or until the quarrel and the cause
You can compose, to give them laws
As arbiter of war and peace.
For this, of all the world you shall
Be styled James the Just.

These verses must have sounded sweet in the ears of him who loved to cast himself in the role of Solomon! More praise was yet to follow, and in extravagant language the Captain proceeded to praise the King's remarkable generosity to himself and his house:

Myself a Gipsy here do shine
Yet are you maker, Sir, of mine.
Oh that confession could content
So high a bounty that doth know
No part of motion but to flow,
And giving never to repent.

The second gipsy now proceeded to tell the Prince's fortune, though happily for poor Charles he could not really read the future! Afterwards, much to the delight of the court, the other gipsies made appropriate and often witty comments on the fortunes of Buckingham's wife, mother and others of the family¹ who were present.

¹ They were the Countess of Rutland, the Countess of Exeter, Lady Purbeck, and Lady Elizabeth Hatton.

‘THE KING DELIGHTETH TO HONOUR’

The fortune telling finished, the masque proceeded gaily with hilarious songs and dances, in which the gipsies were joined by country folk, and the wild strains of romany music gave place to the popular melodies of country dances. The whole pageant ended with dignified and highly sounding verses specially designed to leave, as it were, a pleasant taste in the mouth of the King. Captain and gipsies combined in an elaborate panegyric of James, uttered in metre which is a fine example of Jonson’s genius:

Look how the winds, upon the waves grown tame,
Take up land sounds upon their purple wings,
And, catching each from other, bear the same
To every angle of their sacred springs.
So will we take his praise and hurl his name
About the globe in thousand airy rings.

This masque so pleased the King that he had it repeated two days later when he visited Belvoir Castle, and again at Windsor in September, 1621. By way of matching Buckingham’s verses of welcome he had composed similar stanzas wherewith he might take his adieu:

The heavens that wept perpetually before,
Since we came hither show their smiling cheere;
This goodly house it smiles and all this store
Of huge provisions smiles upon us here.
The bucks and stagges in fall they seem to smile,
God send us a smiling boy in a while.

His poetic effort ended with a wish for the felicity and fruitfulness of the happy couple — Buckingham and his lady:

Thou, by whose heat the trees in fruit abound,
Bless them with fruit delicious sweet and fair
That may succeed them in their virtues rare.

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It had been a splendid occasion, establishing beyond all doubt the high degree of Buckingham's favour with James. Great, indeed, in the realm was this man whom it delighted the King to honour. And politically his influence was becoming more and more powerful.

PARLIAMENT AND FOREIGN
POLITICS

WHILE James and Buckingham complacently indulged in mutual compliments, the bulk of the nation was wondering in what strange paths they were preparing to guide the destinies of England. By this time it had become evident that Buckingham's counsels were to weigh more heavily with the King than those of his Parliament. This body had been assembled again in the January of 1621, after an interval of seven years, since foreign affairs had rendered its support indispensable to the King. Its members had come up to London full of hope and enthusiasm, ready to throw the full weight of their patriotic fervour on the King's side, should his intentions with regard to the war in Europe coincide with their own.

During the past three years a drama of religious passion and political intrigue had swept the Continent, involving the fortunes of more than one royal house in its disastrous train. The small state of Bohemia had provided the spark that was to light a pile of inflammable material gathered together during the tortuous course of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The sturdy Protestant subjects of Bohemia had, in 1618, rebelled against the efforts of the Austrians to enforce upon them a Roman Catholic King and government. The fierce struggle between the old and the new faith was precipitated when the Bohemians finally stormed the chamber where the unpopular government held its meetings and hurled three of the Roman Catholic members out of the window, which was almost eighty feet

from the ground. These gentlemen had the good fortune to alight upon a dung heap little the worse for their fall, although the Roman Catholics attributed their strange salvation to the direct intervention of God and His Saints. Known to history as the 'defenestration of Prague', this event lighted the flames of one of the worst religious struggles Europe had ever seen. Taking the bit between their teeth, the Protestants of Bohemia now invited Frederick, the Elector Palatine — James's son-in-law — to become their King. Although he had no vestige of right to the throne and must have known that his action would jeopardize his security in his own state, Frederick accepted the Bohemian offer. 'The Winter King', as he was sneeringly nicknamed by the Jesuits, had not long to reign. In 1620 his army was utterly defeated by the Imperial forces under Tilly in the Battle of the White Mountain. By this time Spanish forces from the Netherlands had overrun his own territory in the Palatinate, and James's unfortunate son-in-law was a fugitive in Europe, driven to find security with Maurice of Nassau at the Hague.

All eyes in Europe were now turned towards the British King. How would he react to the misfortunes of his son-in-law? It was well known that in 1604, with Cecil's approval, he had put an end to the long struggle between England and Spain, and was now most strongly opposed to a re-opening of the breach. There had been a brief ebullition of anti-Spanish feeling at the English Court in 1618, after the downfall of Somerset and the Catholic Howards, and the new favourite was one of the hottest advocates of the resumption of an Elizabethan scheme of hostilities and reprisals against the Spaniard. But James's ear was never open to talk of war, Buckingham's ardour was not long in cooling, and by 1620 he was all in favour of the King's idea of preserving the Spanish alliance. James, Buckingham,

PARLIAMENT AND FOREIGN POLITICS
and Count Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, held secret conferences which were regarded askance by a Protestant nation.

Actually James's schemes were far more innocuous than rumour represented them. The visionary idea which had now captivated his imagination was that he could best aid Frederick's cause by effecting an alliance with Spain, hoping thereby to gain the Spanish King's help in enforcing the Emperor to restore to the Elector his lands in the Palatinate. James considered that Frederick had never had any right to the Bohemian throne and refused to help him in that ambition. Unfortunately, he showed an utter lack of appreciation of the full force of British insularity when he proposed to marry his heir to a Princess of Spain — the Infanta Maria. Nor had he grasped the true principles of the Spanish King when he supposed that, once connected to a Protestant nation by marriage, he would abandon his religion and his hereditary ally and pursue a war against Austria for the restitution of the Palatinate to Frederick. In the whole affair James seems to have been cursed by hallucinations beyond which he could not — or would not — see. Unfortunately Gondomar buoyed him up by holding out false hopes which he knew could never be realized, whilst Buckingham and the Prince gave him their full support in the project of the Spanish marriage.

Meanwhile, the bulk of the nation saw affairs in a very different light, for they had advanced little in their conception of foreign politics since the days of the great Queen Bess, when England's adventurous seamen had struck terror into the heart of the Spaniard, and when a thorough-going hatred of Spain was the creed of every good Briton. The growing Puritanism of the middle classes had identified the hated power of Spain with the equally detested domination of the Church of Rome, and against the

Spaniard they had by now built up a stubborn wall of religious conviction and insular prejudice.

Moreover, they had been genuinely touched to the heart by the sufferings of their co-religionists on the continent, and were hotly in favour of taking up arms in their defence. But to their unschooled imaginations the arch enemy of Protestantism was the Spaniard, and in their estimation, to crush Spain was to crush the power of Roman Catholicism. When James called together his Parliament in 1621, it was to ask for funds to conduct a war in defence of the Palatinate. Unfortunately, it was to be forcibly demonstrated that King and Parliament held diametrically opposed views upon the form the war was to take. And as for the proposed match with Spain, there could be no doubt that it would cause an explosion of feeling in the House of Commons, which would have visions of the Jesuits again at large in the realm, and the proud Protestantism of England brought under the domination of the Papal yoke.

But as James, regally attired in his purple robes, with a rich crown upon his head, rode in state to open this eventful Parliament, the predominating feelings were of graciousness on his side and loyalty on that of his subjects. Contrary to his usual custom, he spoke most affectionately to the crowds who lined the route to Westminster, waving his hand and saying 'God bless ye, God bless ye'.¹ Evidently he felt the need of his subjects' loyal support most strongly. But forebodings were felt when he spoke particularly and graciously bowed to Gondomar, the unpopular Spaniard. The great favour in which the Buckingham clan still flourished was also publicly demonstrated when the King singled out the favourite's mother and wife as the objects of his courtesy, disregarding all the other great ladies who lined the route.

¹ SIMONDS D'EWES, *Autobiography*, I, p. 170.

As Lords and Commons assembled in the Great Hall at Westminster to hear what James had to say, a further demonstration of Buckingham's high station was afforded in the fact that James kept him by his side all the time, in token of the especial esteem in which he held him. We may imagine that from time to time during his lengthy harangue the garrulous King would glance up at the splendid figure of his young Lord Admiral for confirmation or approval of his views. It was Buckingham's first encounter with Parliament, but he was quite ready to be friendly to that body and even entertained hopes of becoming its popular leader. Unfortunately his favour with the King and increasing power in the realm did not lead members to reciprocate these sentiments, and beneath the surface there smouldered some bitter resentment against him.

But at first members were much more concerned with what James had to say than with their private prejudices. They hung upon every word of his opening speech — and it was wordy enough! After a typical preamble, setting forth at great length his conception of the theories which governed Kings and their Parliaments, James referred vaguely to the burning question of the religious toleration which, it was rumoured, would be given to Roman Catholics in the event of the Prince's marriage to the Infanta. His listeners had to be content with the enigmatic assurance that whatever he might think fit to do in this matter would in no way be detrimental to the Protestant religion. It was a characteristic evasion of the issue.

Turning to the subject of supplies, James was much more explicit. For ten years, he declared, Parliament had granted him nothing, so that there could now be no reason for a refusal of subsidies. Since Buckingham had taken up the office of Lord High Admiral, great improvements had taken place in the naval administration, which had resulted

in a considerable saving of expenditure, whilst in the Household and various departments of government similar reforms and drastic retrenchments had taken place. Any money which they might decide to grant him, James could guarantee would not be dissipated.

Finally came what was to Parliament the foremost question — the subject of the Palatinate. James assured his listeners that he had spent endless money in embassies to effect its restoration to his son-in-law. He wished for peace, but preferred to treat for peace with a sword in his hand, so urged Parliament to give him the necessary support to enable him to assist the Protestant cause if all his negotiations were to fail.¹

It was a speech which said much — and yet nothing of any importance. James simply wanted money to give him a free hand in his own schemes, the details of which he was evidently not prepared to divulge. The Commons must have felt dissatisfied at the omissions in the King's speech but, hoping no doubt for further enlightenment, they received it with the greatest loyalty, determined not to cloud the issue by any undue criticism. Never had James known so united and so loyal a House. It was unfortunate that he could not manage to deal honestly with it.

Parliament was willing — nay, anxious — to vote large supplies for the pursuit of war on a grand scale against Spain. But the Council of War had reported that an annual amount of £900,000 was necessary to conduct the campaign in an adequate manner. Such a large sum the Commons were by no means ready to vote without some indication as to how it was to be used. James's idea was to unite with the Protestant Princes of Germany, and place himself at the head of a movement to compel the Emperor to restore the Palatinate. The Commons, on the other

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1619-23, p. 217.

hand, would hear of nothing but a war for the utter annihilation of Spain. The gracious tact of Elizabeth might have guided these loyal, but mistaken, subjects in the way they should go, but the undignified subterfuges in which James chose to indulge first served to cool their ardour and then turned their loyalty into fierce and bitter opposition.

Parliament must have known that James and Buckingham were very friendly with Gondomar, and this, coupled with James's reticence upon the subject of the Spanish war, would inevitably arouse their suspicion. But, none the less, as if to demonstrate their goodwill to the King, they voted him a supply of £160,000, not enough to carry on a war, they explained, but sufficient to ease his personal finances. James was delighted, and rewarded them with many fair words, but at the same time he was assuring Gondomar of the constancy of his affection for the Spanish King. He even went so far as to hold out hopes that he might be ready to acknowledge the Pope as Head of the Church in matters spiritual, if he would only abstain from interference in temporal affairs. Gondomar took all this sceptically enough, knowing full well that the restitution of the Palatinate lay at the back of all this amiable discourse. Without actually promising anything, he managed to hoodwink James into believing that, if his son-in-law renounced all claim to Bohemia, Philip might withdraw his forces from the Palatinate and try to check the Imperial advance.

Meanwhile, as James continued to temporize on the war question, both Houses were rapidly losing their tempers. At first, their patriotic fervour had hidden the grievances which lay smouldering beneath the surface. But the unpopular actions of the King and the continued omnipotence of his favourite would not go uncriticized for long, once they had abandoned the topic of foreign policy.

It was, no doubt, a veiled attack on Buckingham when

the Upper House proceeded to fall upon the tribe of courtiers promoted by James to high rank regardless of the dignity of the ancient nobility. Spirited scenes occurred when a protest was entered against the fact that certain Scottish and Irish peers had taken precedence of English nobles. In the meantime, an old grievance had cropped up to occupy the attention of the Commons, who proceeded to attack the system of monopolies, in which the favourite, though not financially involved, had none the less taken quite a serious interest.

These monopolies were exclusive rights granted by the Crown to individuals or bodies of individuals to manufacture and sell certain articles. Their unpopularity was due to the fact that they were invariably accompanied by a rise in the price of such commodities as were involved. At the present moment great scandals had resulted from the misuse of these grants, and the Commons proceeded to hold an inquiry into the abuses which had crept into the licensing of inns and alehouses, and the manufacture of laces and fine materials from gold and silver thread. It was common knowledge that Buckingham had strongly supported the royal right to grant these monopolies, and shown himself angry at any attempt to evade them. Apart from his own conviction that they were a definite addition to the King's authority, he was influenced by the fact that his two brothers, Edward and Christopher, had invested substantial sums in some of the manufactures so protected. It was hardly likely, therefore, that Buckingham would look on with equanimity whilst this royal privilege was attacked.

Caring nothing for the favourite, the Commons fell with fierce passion upon those who had abused the monopolies. Sir Francis Michell was sent on foot and bareheaded to the Tower, whilst Sir Giles Mompesson only evaded the fate which was awaiting him when he managed to elude the

serjeants who held him in custody and escape to the continent. At this point a member of the Lower House made the speech — ominous it must have sounded in Buckingham's ears — that 'they best defended the King's prerogative who tried to preserve it against the vermin that would destroy the commonwealth'.¹

Worse was yet to come. Not content with attacking those who had abused the monopolies, the Commons now proceeded to lay before the Upper House a complaint against the referees, Bacon and Mandeville, who, with the King's permission, had sanctioned the recent abuses. It was clear that Parliament was rapidly becoming conscious of its own authority in thus demanding the right to inquire into the conduct of ministers of the crown. James, loth to dissolve Parliament, resolved to try and appease the members by telling them a fable.

'Before Parliament met,' he declared, 'my subjects, whenever they had any favour to ask, used to come either to me or to Buckingham. But now, as if we had both ceased to exist, they go to Parliament. All this is most disrespectful. I will, therefore, tell you a fable. In the days when animals could speak, there was a cow burthened with too heavy a tail, and, before the end of the winter she had it cut off. When the summer came, and the flies began to annoy her, she would gladly have had her tail back again. I and Buckingham are like the cow's tail and when the session is over you will be glad to have us back again to defend you from abuses.'²

It was all in vain. In the House of Lords the attack on Bacon and Mandeville proceeded vigorously, and when Pembroke spoke of them as 'two great lords' he was sharply reprimanded and reminded that 'no lords of this House

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1619-23, p. 231.

² GARDINER, IV, p. 49.

are to be named great lords for they are all peers'.¹ This language, together with the attack on the referees, seems to have alarmed Buckingham to such an extent that he hastened to Williams for counsel. The Dean advised a complete reversal of his former policy, advocating that he should throw himself in with the popular movement. 'You must not quarrel with Parliament for tracing delinquents to their proper form,' he declared, 'for it is their proper work. Follow this Parliament in their undertakings, swim with the tide and you cannot be drowned. My sentence is, cast all monopolies into the Dead Sea. Damn them by revocation.' In short, Buckingham was to let Parliament see that 'he loved not his own mistakings, and was the most forward to recall them'.²

Acting on this advice, James sent Buckingham to the Upper House to convey his gracious message of thanks to them for their endeavours, and encouragement to proceed further. Touching his own part in the affair the Marquis declared that two of his brothers had been involved, and that he himself had been drawn in to be a means of furthering many of these grants. In his youth and inexperience it had not occurred to him that they were in any way detrimental to the commonwealth. He was more than willing to expiate his sins, and if his father had begotten two sons to be grievances to the country, he had also begotten a third who would help in punishing them. In conclusion, he graciously added that this was the first time he had known what a Parliament was, that hitherto he had considered that body detrimental to the King's prerogative and that now he was ready to make himself the means whereby Parliaments should be frequently summoned.

¹ ELSING, *Notes of Debates in the House of Lords*, 1621, 1625, and 1628. Ed. RELF, *Camden Society Pub.*, p. 42.

² HACKET, *Scrinia Reserata*, Part I, p. 50.

But Buckingham was soon to find that his espousal of the popular cause had not had its desired effect. The Commons might have been appeased by his sudden change of front, but the Lords could perhaps read deeper into his motives and were not inclined to pay much attention to his fair speeches.

The recent attacks now culminated in an inquiry into the conduct of the Lord Chancellor, who was brought before the Upper House for trial on a charge of receiving bribes. Though he himself was the most surprised of all men at the unexpected accusation, and though there was little evidence to show that in receiving gifts he had done more than follow a very common, if corrupt, custom of the times, he was heavily fined and publicly disgraced.

Buckingham's part in his trial was not so mean and treacherous as is usually supposed. He had clearly realized that there could be no urging that Bacon had not received certain bribes during the administration of his office, but whilst admitting this, he repeatedly requested the Lords to consider how common this practice had become, and to take merciful account of the exalted station of the Chancellor. His constant intercession on Bacon's behalf was plucky, in view of the temper rapidly developing in the Upper House.

There were dramatic scenes in that chamber when Sir Henry Yelverton, who had been sentenced to imprisonment in the Tower in the previous year, was brought from his confinement to give an account to the Lords of his conduct with regard to the enforcement of the unpopular monopolies and patents. The feeling displayed during this inquiry was such as to infuriate James and drive Buckingham into open defiance. For Yelverton, bitter at his long and unjust sentence, vented his feelings against the favourite, asserting that it was only the fear of

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Buckingham 'ever at His Majesty's hand, ready upon every occasion to hew him down', which had led him to enforce the monopolies. He also revealed that Buckingham had told him 'he would not hold his place a month if he did not conform himself in better measure to the patent of inns'.¹ The House gasped at this temerity, but worse was yet to follow. Yelverton went on to remind the favourite of 'the articles exhibited in this place against Hugh Spencer',² and it is likely that he would have been silenced had not Buckingham haughtily commanded him to proceed.

The points at issue in Yelverton's trial from this moment lost themselves in the question as to how far he had laid a scandal upon Buckingham and indirectly insulted the King. The debates which followed in the Upper House were vitriolic, and when finally on May 14th Yelverton was brought before the Bar he was commanded to pay 10,000 marks — one half to Buckingham and the other to the King — sentenced to a long imprisonment, and made to explain away his words.

With one of those magnificent gestures so typical of him Buckingham freely remitted his part of the fine, and besought the King to do likewise. In June the Houses were prorogued until November, with the favourite outwardly triumphant. But a struggle had been opened, of a deeper significance than any of the combatants realized. The sacrosanctity of the Kingship, through its ministers, had been attacked, and these proceedings were only the forerunners of a contest which was to leave an unforgettable imprint upon the annals of our history.

When the new session opened, the Commons were determined to be put off no longer, and resolved to force the King's hand against the detested power of Spain.

¹ *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 121.

² *Ibid.*

Led by such fiery spirits as Phelips, Coke, Wentworth and Pym, they proceeded to launch a violent attack upon the Spaniard. Pym established himself as one of the greatest of Parliamentary orators by the burning rhetoric with which he now proceeded to sketch the calamities he foresaw as a consequence of the proposed match with Spain. As usual, Roman Catholicism was inseparably associated with the Spanish alliance, and it was to the danger of an increase in Papacy that he now applied himself — 'If the Papists once obtain a connivance, they will press for a toleration; from thence to an equality; from an equality to a superiority; from a superiority to an extirpation of all contrary religions.'¹ The growing Puritanism of the middle classes took alarm at these words, and the Commons resolved that a petition on the point of religion should be prepared immediately and presented to the King. At the same time they showed their loyalty to the true interests of the nation by voting a subsidy for the support of the troops in the Palatinate.

Before the petition could be presented, however, Gondomar had learnt what was going on, and proceeded to deal with James as only he knew how. The letter he now penned to the King was a masterpiece of insolence. Were it not for the fact, he declared, that James must only be waiting to punish his unruly subjects, he himself would have left the realm already — 'since you would have ceased to be a King here, and as I have no army here at present to punish these people myself.'²

James was certainly straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel when, insensitive to the insult dealt him by the Spanish Ambassador, he proceeded to remonstrate angrily with the Commons for arguing on matters beyond their capacity, touching upon the royal prerogative. It is well

¹ *Proceedings and Debates in 1621*, II, p. 210.

² GARDINER, IV, p. 249.

known how, touched upon their sorest point — the matter of privilege — the Commons solemnly entered a Remonstrance in their Journals. When he sent for the book and tore out the page with his own hand, James alienated the House beyond any hope of reconciliation. The only possible outcome of these proceedings was dissolution.

That James's unconciliatory attitude towards Parliament had been greatly fostered by Buckingham seems more than probable. During most of these tempestuous proceedings the King's ill health had kept him at Newmarket where he would give access to none of his councillors, preferring merely the company of his favourite. On December 16th, Williams — now Lord Keeper — had written to James, wisely advising him that the Commons regarded their privileges as inherent and not of grace, and he would do well to acknowledge this, and assure them he had no wish to infringe them. Yet Buckingham's counsels lay in another direction and James disregarded the wisdom of Williams. By now the favourite had come very strongly under the influence of Gondomar, and was ready to seize any opportunity of silencing those who opposed the Spanish alliance. When, for form's sake, James consulted his Council on the advisability of a dissolution, the councillors looked at each other dismally, saying nothing until Pembroke broke the ice by declaring that since the King had declared his will 'it is our business not to dispute but to vote'. Flushed by triumph, Buckingham challenged this councillor — 'If you wish to contradict the King, you are at liberty to do so, and to give your reasons. If I could find any reasons I would do so myself, even though the King himself is present'.¹ The silence was resumed, no debate took place, and a dissolution was decided upon. In great delight, Buckingham hastened to Gondomar's lodging to

¹ GARDINER, IV, p. 265.

inform the Spanish Ambassador that he had obtained his desire. With Parliament silenced, the marriage negotiations could proceed.

Buckingham's unpopularity with all good Protestants was now complete, and it even began to be rumoured that the favourite was ready to go over to the Papal fold. It is strongly to be doubted whether Buckingham's religious convictions were stable enough to make him desire such a conversion. He was not really a deeply religious man, although later he definitely allied himself with the High Church party, led thereto no doubt by the influence of his friendship with Laud and his love for that beauty in all forms of ceremonial which the Puritans so strenuously denounced. During Charles's reign, Arminianism flourished under the aegis of the still powerful favourite.

At this particular moment, however, domestic influences, together with that of Gondomar, may have worked upon Buckingham to some extent. It was well known that his wife's conversion had been merely nominal, whilst his mother frequently inclined towards the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church. But James was determined to stop all the gossip which anticipated Buckingham's apostasy, and in January, 1622, the Marquis, with his wife, his mother and his sister, came to the Lord Bishop of London's palace, and were accompanied by the choir of St. Paul's into the chapel, where they were all confirmed by the Bishop, with whom they afterwards dined. In the following June we find the three ladies receiving Communion publicly in the King's Chapel, and, it is said, rewarded by a grateful James with the gift of £2000.

In the meantime negotiations with Spain were proceeding upon the subject of the proposed marriage. James's elder son, Henry, had refused to entertain the thought of a similar match, avowing that he would flee

the realm rather than wed a Roman Catholic — ‘two religions shall not lie in my bed’, he stoutly declared. Charles had no such feelings. The mere fact that Buckingham so hotly favoured the union made it appear a brilliant stroke of diplomacy to the Prince, who had the highest possible conception of his friend’s wisdom and statecraft. Gondomar had also worked upon him during the past few months, even suggesting to him that better results might be obtained from the negotiations were he to visit Madrid incognito with only one or two servants. Moreover, Charles knew that the proposed marriage was one of his father’s dearest wishes, and it is small wonder that in face of all this combined persuasion the Prince — who had always found it easier to take the line of least resistance — made no objections. He knew that this marriage was avowedly to aid the cause of his dearly loved sister and so was prepared to shelve personal feelings. But, we are told, one day when he had been publicly expressing his admiration for a portrait of the Infanta, he turned aside and remarked to one of his personal attendants, ‘Were it not for the sin, it would be well if princes could have two wives; one for reason of state, the other to please themselves.’¹ Whatever private disinclinations he may have had he seems to have overcome, and after the dissolution of Parliament he was just as impetuous in his desire for the marriage as Buckingham.

In March Lord Digby — afterwards the Earl of Bristol — had been sent to the Spanish Court to conduct preliminary negotiations, and in May, 1622, Gondomar was recalled to Madrid that the two might confer upon the problems arising out of the suggested alliance. Only four months later he received a letter from Buckingham which must have more than satisfied him as to the results of his own

¹ GARDINER, IV, p. 368.

diplomacy in England. For it appeared that Roman Catholicism was about to enjoy an overwhelming triumph in that country. 'Here all things are prepared upon our parts,' wrote the favourite, 'priests and recusants all at liberty, all the Roman Catholics well satisfied, and our prisons, emptied of priests and recusants, are filled with zealous ministers for preaching against the match.' But there was a proverbial fly in the ointment!

Buckingham found himself at a loss to understand the fact that, despite Gondomar's fair promises to himself when in England, the attack upon the unfortunate German Protestants was proceeding with unabated vigour. The Imperial forces, under Tilly, were beleaguering Heidelberg, the stronghold of Protestantism, and it was doubtful whether that unfortunate city could hold out much longer. Buckingham found it necessary to warn Gondomar that any further acts of aggression could only jeopardize all prospects of an alliance, and probably result in 'a bloody and unreconcilable war between the Emperor and my master'. In conclusion he urged 'that as we have put the ball to your foot, you take a good and speedy resolution there to hasten the happy conclusion of the match.'¹

On the heels of this letter came the news that Heidelberg had fallen to Tilly's forces, and all Europe now waited with bated breath for the next move of the British monarch. Had James been actuated by the nobility which he imagined to be his portion as a mediator in Europe, he would have regarded the whole question from a much higher view-point than the one he now chose.

Nepotism coloured his vision to the extinction of all else, and the desire to restore his son-in-law to the Palatinate became his paramount aim. Even the grand idea of con-

¹ CABALA, p. 224.

certed action with Spain against the Emperor presently began to narrow itself down to an overwhelming desire to conclude a brilliant and wealthy marriage for his son. To James the Protestant cause was bewilderingly confused with his family interests, and consequently his diplomacy became increasingly intricate as he tried to benefit first the one and then the other of his children.

On the receipt of the news from Heidelberg, London blazed with war fever, which momentarily affected those two very impressionable young men — Charles and Buckingham. The Prince sought an interview with his father, and going down on his knees before the King with tears in his eyes, besought him to take pity upon his poor, distressed sister, her husband and children, and no longer to dally with treaties. With boyish fervour Charles offered to raise an army, and lead his subjects to war against the Spaniard. But James, ever reluctant to commit himself to a Spanish war, answered that he would make one more effort at diplomacy with Spain before committing himself to such a course. Endymion Porter, a gentleman of the Prince's bedchamber, who had spent the early years of his life in Spanish court circles, was selected as messenger for Madrid. He was to undertake the delicate task of reminding the Spanish ministers of their promises, dangling the bait of a possible visit to Spain by Charles. Officially he carried an 'either-or' in the form of the Council's ultimatum to the King of Spain, demanding a favourable answer to the Palatinate question within ten days, or the Earl of Bristol would be recalled from Madrid and the negotiations broken off. On October 7th, 1622, Porter received his instructions from the King's own hand, and as he left the Palace the onlookers cried unanimously, 'Bring us war! Bring us war!' Such was the temper of the nation.

At the court of Spain the Earl of Bristol was finding his

position as ambassador extraordinary in the marriage negotiations bewildering enough. On the one hand, he had the visionary dreams of James that Spain would really take up arms against the Emperor for the restitution of the Palatinate to the headstrong and unstable Frederick. On the other hand, Spain cherished the idea that could she secure the person of the English Prince, there would be every prospect of his conversion to Catholicism and the return of England to the Papal fold. In the midst of all these misapprehensions, Bristol must have found it very difficult to keep his hold on reality.

On November 1st Porter appeared at Madrid, and the private letter he carried from Buckingham was well received by the Condé d'Olivares, the Spanish King's favourite and chief minister. A warm welcome was assured the Prince should he decide to visit Spain. An answer to the official demand for the restitution of the Palatinate was withheld on the excuse of the King's absence. But Porter, exceeding his authority, chose to go straight to Olivares, asking for a definite agreement that the Spanish forces in the Palatinate would uphold the Protestant cause. The haughty Spanish minister immediately flared into a passion, asserting that it was preposterous to ask the King of Spain to take arms against his uncle, the Catholic League and the House of Austria. He ended his tirade with the ominous words: 'That for the match, he knew nothing of it, nor could he understand what it meant.'¹

In the heat of the moment Olivares had said too much, and to Bristol's remonstrance he merely declared that Porter was not a fit person to whom one might confide momentous secrets. To cover up his minister's mistake, the King of Spain reassured Sir Walter Aston, the resident English Ambassador in Spain, that, if necessary, he was

¹ Buckingham's Relation to Parliament, *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 221.

ready to dispatch an army to the support of the Palatinate cause. But in the meantime, one by one, the last garrisons of Protestantism were falling into the hands of Tilly.

There was another obstacle in the way of the match which Charles and Buckingham had apparently never remotely anticipated. The young Spanish Infanta, whose charm lay rather in her exquisite colouring than in regularity of features, was now almost seventeen. Her fair complexion and reddish curls won universal envy and admiration from the olive-hued señoritas who attended her, whilst her gentle disposition made her beloved by all. But underneath her apparent docility she had a strong will, and was deeply upset by the suggestion to marry her to a Protestant Prince. Her brother loved her well enough to listen to her openly avowed dislike of the whole idea, but Olivares was determined not to sacrifice his schemes to a woman's whims, and theologians were brought before her to urge the magnificent prospect of bringing a heretic nation back to the Papal fold. Under combined persuasion, her zeal conquered her reluctance, and she declared herself ready for the sacrifice.

On December 2nd, 1622, the King of Spain presented Bristol with the marriage articles, demanding freedom of worship in their own houses for the English Roman Catholics; complete liberty in religious matters for the Infanta's household, and the education of her children in their mother's faith until at least the age of nine. Thus mildly did Spain open her campaign for the Roman Catholics in England! With regard to the Palatinate question, the Spaniards declared that it would be impossible for the Spanish King to deliver a seventy days' ultimatum to the Emperor. Yet Bristol — to his future detriment — assured James that the Spaniards were in earnest about the match, and that he failed to see how they



THE INFANTA DONNA MARIA OF SPAIN

From the portrait by Velasquez, Gallery del Prado, Madrid

Photo : Anderson

could send their Princess, handsomely endowed, to England if they intended to quarrel over the Palatinate.

On December 13th Porter left Spain, carrying with him the marriage articles and private information from Gondomar that the Prince would be very welcome should he decide to visit Madrid. On January 2nd he arrived in England with his momentous dispatches, and speculations were rife as to what was to happen next. Some said that Gondomar was to visit Germany in person to secure the restitution of the Palatinate. With great apprehension, the prospect of a personal visit to Spain by the Prince himself was discussed. In other circles, it was current talk that Buckingham would go in person, as Lord High Admiral, with a large fleet to fetch the Infanta. On January 4th, 1623, an order was given for the preparation of a fleet of ten ships for this very purpose, and it was publicly announced that Buckingham was to undertake the errand. James had shut his eyes to the difficulties surrounding his son-in-law's position, and was pressing the match with the mistaken notion that Spain would really be able to assist him in the unfortunate Frederick's cause, which every day became more hopeless. To this end he was willing to make impossible promises with regard to the Roman Catholics in Britain, regardless of the consequences he must face when next he had to meet his Parliament. But a scheme, beside which James's folly pales into insignificance, was hatching in the fertile brains of Buckingham and the Prince.

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GONDOMAR had astutely sown the seed of the idea of a personal visit to Spain in the minds of Buckingham and the Prince, and now that seed began to germinate and develop a form which, to the majority of contemporary statesmen, seemed pure madness. It is probable that by the beginning of January, 1623, the idea had been suggested to James that the Prince should accompany the fleet which Buckingham was preparing to bring over the Infanta. But, too impatient to wait till May, when the fleet was to be ready, these two rash beings evolved a scheme which seemed to them to surpass all the historic adventures of the old knights-errant for boldness and excitement. The more Buckingham and Charles discussed their new idea, the more it fired their romantic ardour. The notion which was to make half Europe gasp with astonishment, was that the Prince — accompanied, of course, by his Steenie — should traverse Europe incognito, on horseback in Quixotic fashion, with a retinue of only one or two servants. Charles's imagination was captivated at the thought of such a chivalrous enterprise. Like the gallant knights of old, he was to go forth boldly in quest of his lady love, seeking he knew not what adventures by the way.

The main setback to their schemes was that James would fail to see the romance of the adventure, and was likely to be only too clearly aware of its difficulties. But he must be talked round, and who were more competent to do this than the two to whom he found refusal so difficult? It was

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decided that the Prince should first approach his father, and — securing his solemn oath of secrecy — convey the scheme to him as his own most earnest desire. The Prince having broken the ice, Buckingham's greater dexterity was to fulfil the rest. The two conspirators waited until they caught the King in a mood which augured well and then approached him mysteriously by beseeching his complete silence upon a certain matter about to be communicated to him, and which could not proceed but by his royal will. Highly flattered, the King consented quite amicably to preserve the secret, and thereupon the Prince fell upon his knees and with great importunity offered his request, Buckingham standing by without saying a word. James showed less passion than they had expected, and was ready to talk the affair over quite seriously. Buckingham now proceeded to play upon his emotions by assuring him that he would deal a terrible blow to the youthful enthusiasm of his son should he refuse him this request, upon which his heart was so set. Whereupon Charles, seeing his father's mood become more melting every moment, advanced the consideration that by this personal journey he would hasten the treaty with Spain, and the restitution of the Palatinate to his sister and brother-in-law, which he knew his father most passionately desired to accomplish ere he left this world. Buckingham again added his weight to the arguments in favour of the proposal; it would prevent much delay and cut down expenses — a potent consideration with James — whilst it would be much easier to keep the visit a complete secret. They could journey in disguise, and they would be well on their way through France before Whitehall knew of the fact. Against such forceful pleading the King could not hold out, he gave his consent, and all that remained was to nominate the persons who should accompany them in their adventure.

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Once in the privacy of his chamber, James had time for his own cogitations. Arguments pressed thick upon him against this rash enterprise. The personal danger to 'Baby Charles', as he still called his son, struck terror into his heart. The nation would blame him for letting its Prince depart into the power of a foreign country, his fellow monarchs would view his action censoriously, his prestige abroad might easily be ruined.

Gone was his peace of mind. He paced this way and that in an agony of apprehension, and was so overwrought that when the Prince and the Marquis came to him about the arrangements he burst into tears and told them that 'he was undone and it would break his heart if they pursued their resolution'. His arguments against the enterprise came forth in a torrent. The treaty could not be assisted by such rashness, and the only result of the mad enterprise would be that the Spaniards and the Pope, having secured the Prince in Spanish territory, would make the most of their opportunity to press for greater privileges for those of the Roman Catholic religion over here, which would never be agreed to by an English Parliament. Yet, were these privileges not granted, they would cause such delays that the old king feared he would never live to see the marriage take place, or to see his beloved son again. He proceeded to tell Buckingham that his complicity in such a scheme would seal his unpopularity with both people and nobility, and his enemies would make it an occasion to attack him. Nor would it lie in the King's power to protect him against such attack.

With more sighs and tears, the King concluded and begged them to give up the whole idea. To all of this the Prince and Marquis presented a stony front. They did not attempt to meet the King's arguments, but merely reminded him of his promise, Buckingham telling him

bluntly that 'nobody could believe anything he said, when he retracted so soon the promise he had so solemnly made'. He accused him of having sought other advice contrary to his oath of secrecy. The signs of displeasure upon the countenances of the two he loved so well reduced the unfortunate King once again to a tearful, if reluctant, compliance with their wishes.

The debate on the journey was resumed, and it was decided that it should commence without delay, Charles departing under pretext of hunting at Theobalds, and the Marquis ostensibly to take physic at Chelsea. The two companions chosen were Sir Francis Cottington, the Prince's secretary, who had at one time been His Majesty's agent at the Spanish Court, and Endymion Porter, who had so recently returned from his confidential mission to Spain. The King approved their choice, and, observing that things necessary for the journey might occur to another, he sent for Sir Francis Cottington to ask his advice upon such matters.

It was an anxious moment for the two young men. 'Cottington will be against the journey', whispered Buckingham in the Prince's ear. 'He durst not,' replied Charles. The King then entered with Sir Francis, remarking to him cheerfully, 'Cottington, here is Baby Charles and Steenie who have a great mind to go by post into Spain to fetch home the Infanta and will have but two more in their company and have chosen you for one. What think you of the journey?' At these words Cottington — to use the phrase he himself afterwards employed — 'fell into such a trembling that he could hardly speak'. Being commanded to answer he replied that he thought it would render all that had been done towards the match fruitless, and that the Spaniards would press for further advantages for the Roman Catholics once they had the Prince in their hands. At these words James flung himself upon his bed,

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exclaiming, 'I told you this before', and, with more tears and passion, moaned again that he was undone and would lose Baby Charles.

Beside themselves with rage, the Prince and Buckingham now proceeded to pour out the vials of their wrath upon the unfortunate secretary. Buckingham rated him soundly, saying 'that he knew his pride well enough, and that, because he had not first been advised with, he was resolved not to like it'. His counsel, he added, had merely been asked upon the choice of route and he had presumed to give advice upon matters outside his province. Whereupon the King, seeing that this faithful servant was likely to suffer for having answered him honestly, was forced to expostulate 'Nay, by God, Steenie, you are very much to blame to use him so. He answered me directly to the question I asked him, and very honestly and wisely; and yet you know he said no more than I told you before he was called in.'¹ Buckingham's outburst had shown the King how passionately his heart was set upon this enterprise, and he realized that further opposition was useless. It only remained to make the necessary preparations. The parting between the King and his son and favourite, it was decided, should be as casual as possible so as to attract no undue attention.

On Monday, February 17th, 1623, the King left his favourite residence at Theobalds to go to Royston. At Theobalds he took leave of the Prince and Buckingham, who, it was publicly announced, were to have a few days absence to go on private business to Newhall, the Marquis's new mansion. As they came to take their leaves of the King, bystanders heard him say: 'See that you be with me on Friday night,' to which Buckingham replied, 'Sir, if we

¹ The account of the interview is given in CLARENDON, *History of the Rebellion*, I, pp. 22-32.

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distance the King's coach, and Buckingham soon realized that it was Boischot, the Spanish Ambassador, with several officers of the court in attendance, on their way to London. Since an encounter might result in recognition, despite their disguise, the adventurous trio spurred their horses to a little cross-country jumping, avoiding the high road. But they had been seen. Sir Henry Mainwaring, Lieutenant of Dover Castle, who, with Sir Lewis Lewkenor, Master of Ceremonies, was attending Boischot, espying such suspicious characters in their great hoods, with pistols at their belts, sent a post to the Mayor of the next town on the route which the strangers had seemed to be following. At Canterbury, therefore, they were seized by the Mayor as they were taking fresh horses. The worthy dignitary was quite clear that he must arrest them, but seemed somewhat confused as to his warrant. At first he declared it was the order of the Privy Council, but a little judicious probing soon melted it down to that of Lewkenor and Mainwaring. Here was indeed a dilemma, but Buckingham's ready wit soon extricated them. Removing his false beard, he allowed the now astonished Mayor to perceive his identity, and whispered in his ear that in his capacity as Lord High Admiral he was going to Dover to take a secret view of the preparation of the fleet in the Narrow Seas, accompanied by two of his servants.

These setbacks, together with the slowness of their new horses, delayed their arrival in Dover until six o'clock that night. Here Sir Francis Cottington and Endymion Porter had been instructed to join them, and the five adventurers met and discussed the prospects of a crossing. As the night was very tempestuous they decided to delay their journey until six next morning, when they set sail. Apparently they had a troubled crossing and were all feeling rather sick when they landed at Boulogne by two o'clock in the

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afternoon. Nevertheless, they pressed forward, reaching Montreuil that night and Paris by Friday, the 21st.

Just before they reached Paris they had been greatly entertained by meeting two German gentlemen, newly returned from England, who described to them how they had seen the Prince and the Marquis of Buckingham with the King at Newmarket a day or so ago. Sir Richard Graham intimated that perhaps they were mistaken, at which they indignantly protested that they hoped they could recognize two such great men when they saw them!

In Paris their disguise was in greater danger of being penetrated, and no doubt Cottington would have preferred to pass the French capital on the outskirts, but the Prince desired to have a glimpse of the famous city and court. Accordingly Charles and Buckingham bought periwigs to overshadow their foreheads, and proceeded to the Royal Palace. They entered unrecognized, even though they met Monsieur Cadinet, who had recently been French Ambassador in England, and from a gallery were rewarded by a sight of the King 'solacing himself with familiar pleasures', and the Queen Mother sitting at her table. Now by chance, they had overheard two Frenchmen speak of a masque and dance to be rehearsed that night, and the Prince developed an overwhelming desire to visit these festivities. Although it was arrant folly to linger in a place where discovery would be most awkward, nothing could dissuade the Prince and so that evening they set out for the French Court.

They were admitted to the scene of the rehearsal by the Duc de Mont Bason, out of common humanity to a pair of strangers who looked as if they had travelled far to get a glimpse of the famous court. They were rewarded by seeing the Queen of France and her sister Henrietta Maria, rehearsing. Many chroniclers have sought

romantically to point out that from this moment Charles conceived a hidden passion for the Princess who afterwards became his wife. On the contrary, the letter he wrote to his father describing what he had seen, scarcely mentions her and apparently his thoughts were all for his hoped-for Spanish bride. 'There danced the Queen and Madame,' he wrote, 'amongst which the Queen is the handsomest which hath wrought in me a greater desire to see her sister' (the Infanta).¹

At three o'clock next morning, February 23rd, they left Paris and after six days' hard riding reached Bayonne. Their fine riding coats had apparently attracted much attention upon the route, so at Bordeaux they deemed it expedient to equip themselves with five very ordinary coats all alike in colour and texture, which conveyed the impression that they were gentlemen of simple fortunes. By so doing they managed to evade the too ready hospitality of the Duc d'Épernon.

They had now entered upon the season of Lent and could get no meat at the inns. So they indulged in a sporting interlude which delighted them. Near Bayonne they had chanced across a herd of goats and their young. Sir Richard Graham whispered to Buckingham that he would snatch one of the kids to provide meat for them, which chance remark being overheard by the Prince, he jestingly replied, 'Why, Richard, do you think you may practise here your old tricks again upon the borders?' So they paid the goatherd well for one of the kids, and then had to essay the task of catching their purchase. How the Prince enjoyed the sight of the Marquis of Buckingham and his servant heatedly chasing the elusive kid on foot! Finally, with a fine aim, Charles put an end to their labours by killing the kid with a shot through the head from his Scottish pistol.

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 121.

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Charles, at any rate, seems to have enjoyed his madcap escapade to the full, and was probably happier now in the company of his beloved 'Steenie' than he had ever been or was ever to be again.

At Bayonne, their manners and behaviour were commented upon by the Comte de Gramont, who, although he courteously allowed them to pass him, later remarked to some of his train that he thought they were gentlemen of much higher rank than their dress betrayed. A few miles beyond Bayonne, they chanced to meet Gresley, Bristol's courier, bearing papers to the King of England, at which Charles glanced, but found them for the most part in cipher. The small portion which he could read, however, was by no means encouraging, but his ardour was not to be damped. Upon his arrival at the English Court Gresley was able to report that whilst Buckingham seemed very tired by his ride across the Continent, he had seldom seen Charles in such high spirits. As soon as the Prince had crossed to the southern bank of the Bidassoa, he showed his youthful exuberance by dancing with glee.

They had brought Gresley back with them so far, that he might bear to the King their first letter written on Spanish soil. First they assured their 'deare dad and gossip' that his two boys were quite safe and had sped through France unharmed and undiscovered. Then they communicated the chilling doubt which lay in Bristol's dispatches — trouble was beginning already! 'The temporal articles are not concluded,' they wrote, 'nor will be till the dispensation comes, which may be God knows when; and when that time comes, they beg twenty days to conceal it.'¹ But Charles sanguinely imagined that these were airy trifles, which his presence would quickly dispel.

In England their 'poor old Dad', with his right leg and

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 403.

foot racked with gout, and his spirits all broken up by the storm of protest which had landed upon him, took up his pen and proceeded to write from his sick bed to his 'Sweet boys and dear ventrous knights, worthy to be put in a new *Romanso*'.¹ Alas for all their elaborate precautions for secrecy — scarcely had the travellers reached Dover than the court had news of their departure. Whereupon the chief members of the King's Council had descended upon him with some passion.

James did not inform his son of all that had happened in the interview at Newmarket, where several councillors went on their knees to beseech James to tell them that the news could not be true. The unfortunate monarch had to admit that it was, and wearily shifted the blame from his own shoulders on to those of the two young men now merrily masquerading abroad. He told the Council how the Prince had passionately desired him to put an end to this distracting business by allowing him to go to Spain in person. A state visit, with its attendant pomp and splendour, was inconvenient — as well as costly — and so the Prince had decided to go privately. His Majesty reminded them that the event was not unprecedented — he, his father and his grandfather had all gone from Scotland to fetch their wives. After a long discourse, the councillors prevailed upon James to send Lord Carlisle to the King of France, to inform that monarch of the Prince's presence, in case he were stayed in France.

Of all this, the last item only was conveyed by James to his two dear boys, and how they would chuckle at the thought of Carlisle making overtures for their safety in France, whilst they were already over the border! Of the international significance of their rash conduct, it is doubtful whether either of them ever thought seriously.

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers* I, p. 399.

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one of the Gentlemen of the King's Bedchamber, and after him Sir Walter Aston, similarly accompanied. The rest of the Council of State and the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber rode behind them, whilst the famous guard 'de los archeros', handsomely arrayed, wound up the triumphal procession.

As Charles passed through the streets of Madrid the people cheered madly, and all lips were singing the popular song composed in his honour by Lope de Vega which told in verse how Charles Stuart, guided by love, had come to the Spanish sky to see his star Maria:

Carlos Estuardo soy
Que, siendo amor mi guia,
Al cielo d'España voy
Por ver mi estrella Maria.

The streets were adorned with rich hangings or curious pictures, and in many places the people had staged little shows, with here a comedian, and there a dancer, to give delight to their exalted visitors.

Once at the Royal Palace, the Prince was to make his début before the Queen, whom he had not yet met officially. She was waiting for them in the State Room, and as the King and the Prince entered hand in hand she advanced halfway to meet them. Together they proceeded towards her cloth of State, upon which were placed three chairs — the Queen sat in the middle, the Prince on her right hand and the King on her left. Afterwards, the Prince was taken to his own very sumptuously furnished apartment in the Palace, where within an hour he received many costly gifts from Her Majesty, including a massive golden basin, set with precious stones, which required two men to carry it. The Countess of Olivares similarly honoured the Marquis of Buckingham with a noble present. The King also, to show his especial trust in the Prince, gave him two golden

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keys to the Palace to bestow upon any two English lords he pleased, whereupon the Prince gave one to Buckingham and one to Bristol. Buckingham also had his own apartment near to the Prince's, and by royal command was to be served with a full and plentiful diet and to be nobly attended. He was generally treated with such courtesy as, Bristol remarked, 'hath not been seen imparted to any stranger merely a subject'.¹

For three more nights the people of Madrid made carnival, with firework displays and torchlight parades, and whenever the Prince was seen walking abroad he was loudly acclaimed on all sides, with the shout: 'Viva el Principe de Galles' — Long live the Prince of Wales! Full descriptions of these festivities were sent to James by his two boys, who appeared to be thoroughly enjoying the novelty of their adventure. But, despite the general rejoicings, the main business seemed in a muddled state. Whilst by all these outward shows the Spaniards apparently desired the match ardently, yet they placed difficulties in the way by hankering persistently after a conversion of the Prince, 'for', wrote Buckingham, 'they say there can be no firm friendship without unity in religion . . . but we put this quite out of the question, because neither our conscience nor the time serves for it'. In view of all this talk of a conversion, the Prince had certainly reason for adding a postscript in his own hand — 'I beseech your Majesty to advise as little with your Council in these businesses as you can.'

To this joint composition James's 'humble slave and dog Steenie' — as Buckingham always signed himself — added a short letter describing the charms of the Infanta, with a few other comforting reflections. 'Without flattery,' he wrote, 'I think there is not a sweeter creature in the world.'

¹ 'A true relation', etc., NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 818.

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Baby Charles is so touched at the heart that he confesses all he ever saw is nothing to her and swears that if he want her, there shall be blows. I shall lose no time in hastening their conjunction, in which I shall please him, her, you, and myself most of all, in thereby getting liberty to make the speedier haste to lay myself at your feet, for never none longed more to be in the arms of his mistress.¹

So Buckingham began his task of matching his wits against those of Olivares and his 'busy Divines'. His hope of speedily hastening the marriage was to prove somewhat vain, for the Spaniards were prepared to go to all lengths to secure the Prince's conversion. Imagining that Bristol was the stumbling block, Gondomar had approached him, beseeching him not to put obstacles in the way of this worthy object. Bristol, not doubting Gondomar's word — which, indeed, was common gossip — made his advances to the Prince one day when he found him walking alone in the gallery of his house. The English Ambassador fell on one knee, and humbly asked Charles, 'What might be the true motive and cause of your Highness's coming hither?' 'Why, my Lord,' answered the Prince, 'do you not know?' 'No, in truth,' replied Bristol, 'nor cannot imagine. The match would be no sufficient cause, for it might have been transacted in your absence and much cost and labour have been spared. But although I cannot imagine the cause myself, yet I will tell you what others report — that your Highness hath intent to change your religion, which if your Highness should do, I shall do my best endeavour that things may be carried out in the discreetest manner.'² The Prince somewhat angrily assured him that he was mistaken, whereupon Bristol humbly apologized, having no idea that one day Charles would make this the basis of a charge of high treason against him.

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 410. ² GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, I, p. 404.

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Since the Prince remained obdurate, the Spaniards next decided to try a preliminary effort at conversion upon Buckingham. Already he had been approached from a higher quarter, for on March 19th, 1623, a certain Didacus de la Fuente bore a letter to the Marquis from the Pope himself, couched in the most flattering terms. He addresses Buckingham as 'Nobleman, Health and the Light of Divine Grace', and goes on to point out to him how greatly his already enormous prestige will gain potency by a defence of the true faith. Not by his accession to titles, honours and riches will men remember him one-half so well as if he should return the English monarchs to the Papal fold. This action, he adds, 'will write the name of your nobleness in the book of the Living, whom the torment of Death toucheth not and the monument of histories shall place you amongst those wise men in whose splendour Kings walked'.¹ These splendid visions did not, apparently, move Buckingham who showed no signs of desiring to change his faith or the Prince's. If the Spaniards thought he was ready for conversion, it was merely that his Arminian views made him ready to conform to a few of the Roman Catholic ceremonies. Thus he was observed, when entering their churches, to bow the knee reverently before the sacrament on the altar. Neither did he attend the Protestant services at the Embassy, which were held regularly by Bristol's chaplains.

It was apparently to gain time, and probably to divert attention from Charles himself, that Buckingham consented on April 4th to the suggestion of Olivares that a few theological arguments should be tried upon himself. He was conveyed very secretly to the monastery of San Jeronimo for a discussion with Francisco de Jesus, a Carmelite friar, who had played an active part in the recent negotiations.

¹ CABALA, March 19th, 1623, the Pope to Buckingham.

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The unfortunate friar quickly discovered that his seed was falling upon barren ground, for never had a prospective convert looked so blank and unperturbed after having been utterly confounded in every point of the argument. Indeed, it seems that Buckingham had made no real effort to follow the discussion at all. Before he set out for the interview he had jotted down on a piece of paper such remarks as he imagined might meet the requirements of the situation! This levity in religious matters did much to lower him in the estimation of the Spaniards.

Three days after this episode things seemed to brighten, for it was announced that the Prince might visit the Infanta. The unexpected pleasure must have been responsible for the impetuous behaviour of which Charles was now guilty. His declaration of affection — a conventional and icy affair — had been prepared for him beforehand. But, on seeing the Infanta, he was evidently overcome by emotions which he chose to express in language so ardent and extravagant that the Queen and the rest of the court were thoroughly shocked. His temerity did not, however, disturb the cool and balanced Maria, who effectively masked her feelings upon the outburst, and replied to his declaration in the formal phrases she had prepared in the first instance. Nothing daunted, Baby Charles wrote to James of his future wife in language more glowing than ever, whilst Steenie was so optimistic that on April 18th he wrote home to cancel some orders which he had given for the sending of tilting horses for Charles, since he thought they would have left Madrid before they arrived. On the same day he wrote to Secretary Conway to tell him that he had secret information that the Pope had granted the dispensation for the marriage. In this he was quite correct, for the Pope, not wishing that the vials of James's wrath should descend upon his Roman Catholic subjects, were his son to return home

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empty handed, had moved the whole burden of responsibility on to Philip's shoulders. The dispensation was to be delivered by the Nuncio at Madrid, *but* the Spanish King was to stand security for all James's promises. Never had Philip found himself in a like dilemma, and for the moment it seemed that Charles and Buckingham had scored a decided triumph.

Meanwhile in England the news of their safe arrival and glorious reception was made known, and to celebrate the event the bells of London rang merrily and the streets glowed to the flames of torches and bonfires. The King, in his lonely palace at Theobalds, picked up his pen, on April 1st, to congratulate his two dear boys upon their magnificent entertainment, which he hoped would not cause them 'to miskenne their olde Dad hereafter'. But he prayed them to make haste, for the royal coffers in England were nearly empty with providing servants and ships to send after the Prince, so that James was fain to drop a hint that a small advance on the marriage dowry would be most welcome! In conclusion he urged them not to forget their principal accomplishment, even though the Spanish Court offered little opportunity of practice — 'Keep yourselves in use of dancing privately, though ye should whistle and sing to one another like Jack and Tom for want of better music.'¹

Now April 23rd was St. George's Day, and as early as March 17th in one of his trifling and garrulous letters James had urged them to celebrate this day with unusual pomp and ceremony, so as to impress the Spanish Court. Together with a galaxy of magnificent jewels, he had sent them their robes of the Order of the Garter to wear for the occasion, and on the evening of the twenty-third the lonely old King sat in his Palace thinking

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 140.

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of the Spaniards enjoying the 'goodly sight' of his two boys dining in their splendid clothes and jewels, and no doubt longing for the time when they could be together again.

But the Spaniards had not, apparently, appreciated the 'goodly sight', and it is on this occasion that we hear for the first time that Buckingham's behaviour caused offence. It may be that what seemed to him the certainty of success, and the knowledge of his splendid appearance in his rich jewels and fine clothes, had combined to produce in him that excitement and rash self-confidence which were so often to prove his undoing. His gestures were disliked by the assembled company, as savouring too much of the French, whilst his familiarity with the Prince left his listeners aghast. They were horrified to hear him calling Prince Charles by undignified and stupid nicknames. Such conduct was altogether beyond the understanding of the staid and conventional Spanish grandees, who could not comprehend the intimacy of the friendship which existed between Charles and Buckingham. Their disgust with the latter had already commenced with his unfavourable reaction to their attempts at his conversion, and the incident which now followed must have put him quite beyond the pale.

The evening of St. George's day had been set aside for a final desperate effort to convert Charles, and he and Buckingham were taken aside into a small room, where four friars were waiting to speak with them. The discussion turned upon the Pope's claim to be considered as the Vicar of Christ upon Earth and the Head of the Church. To prove his point, Father Zacharias quoted the passage in the Gospel where Christ said to Peter, 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy

brethren.' The Prince pointed out that in so applying the quotation they were doing violence to the text, and requested that it should be twice re-read to him in French. After the theologians had obliged him in this, he whispered something in English to Buckingham. The remark had the most amazing effect upon the Duke, for he immediately sprang from his chair, and, after expressing with unseemly violence his low opinion of the friars, he pulled off his hat, hurled it on the floor, and trampled upon it with fierce vigour. After such a demonstration the interview was naturally broken off abruptly.

Further trouble in religious matters seemed likely to result from James's well intentioned efforts to provide Charles and Buckingham with the type of ceremonial they preferred. To this end he had announced in one of his letters, 'I have sent you, my Baby, two of your chaplains fittest for this purpose, Mawe and Wrenn, together with all the stuff and ornaments fit for the service of God. I have fully instructed them so as all their service and behaviour shall, I hope, prove decent and agreeable to the purity of the primitive church and yet as near Roman form as can lawfully be done, for it hath ever been my way to go with the Church of Rome "*usque ad aras*".'¹ But Olivares told Cottington quite distinctly that the chaplains would not be allowed to set foot within the Royal Palace, and although Buckingham once urged Charles to attend the religious ceremonies at Bristol's house, this was not kept up and when, a month later, Cottington was leaving for England he carried with him a complaint from the Prince on this score.

The religious difficulties did not interfere with the reception which the Spanish Court daily exerted itself to give to the Prince and his friends. Apparently, the

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 406.

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relaxation of the sumptuary laws had been followed by an exceptional show of beautiful costumes and magnificent jewels, so that the Prince was moved to write home to his father on April 22nd, telling him that although the number of jewels he had already sent them was far greater than he had at first thought necessary, yet he must have more if he hoped to keep up his appearance 'since my coming, and seeing that my bravery can consist of nothing else. Besides, those which ye have appointed me to give the Infanta, in Steenie's opinion and mine are not fit to be given to her'.¹ Three days later a letter from Steenie himself stressed the point. Buckingham's portraits show how fond he was of beautiful jewels, and he often wore two or three rich necklaces about his neck. So now he besought James to hurry the dispatch of more jewels, or else 'his Dog would want a collar'! In the postscript to this letter — as if to impress the consequences of non-compliance with their requests — Steenie announced that he had sent James a few of the animals in which he appears to have delighted, to wit — four asses, five camels, one elephant and a Barbary horse — adding the threat, 'but if you do not send your Baby jewels enough, I'll stop all other presents, therefore look to it.'² No stronger proof could be required of the extraordinary degree of familiarity into which the King had received his favourite.

It is certain that many rich jewels, some of them originally belonging to Queen Elizabeth, must have found their way to Spain at this time. In answer to his son's requests, James announced that he was sending Sir Francis Stewart to Spain with jewels which the Prince might consider worthy of the Infanta, and from the warrant made out for the delivery of these gems we are able to form some

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 145.

² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

slight estimate of their magnificence. Poor Prince Henry would have turned in his grave could he have seen 'a faire rich sworde, fully garnished with dyamondes of severall bignes', which had been presented to him by his mother, wending its way to Spain to be given to the Spanish monarch. There was also 'a great table dyamond, called the Portugall Dyamond, with the Cobham Pearle hanging at it, and the last of the three pendant pearls which did hang at this jewel'.¹ This priceless gem was given to Olivares. Pearl necklaces, jewelled hatbands, golden chains, pendants of precious gems in rare settings, rings of many a curious and unique design all found their way from the Jewel-House to Spain.

The Spaniards showed their appreciation of the English King's munificence by doing all in their power to entertain royally the Prince and Buckingham, and the enormous retinue of nobles who had flocked out to Spain to join them. Every week some kind of a show was given at the Palace for the entertainment of the visitors, and on these occasions Charles made the most of his opportunity to study the Infanta. 'I have seen the Prince have his eye immovably fixed upon the Infanta half an hour together in thoughtful, speculative posture,'² writes a contemporary. Olivares, with more venom, observed that 'he watched her as a cat doth a mouse'.³ That the Prince was growing impatient to improve his acquaintance with his lady love was natural — up to the present he had had no private conversation with her. Their meetings took place publicly, the Earl of Bristol being present as interpreter, with the King sitting nearby to overhear all that was said.

So it chanced that early one morning the Prince rose and repaired to the *Caso del Campo*, a summer house on the

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 850.

² *Journal to Europe*, 1614-1615, 1616, 1617, 1618, 1619, 1620, 1621, 1622, 1623, 1624, 1625, 1626, 1627, 1628, 1629, 1630, 1631, 1632, 1633, 1634, 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1639, 1640, 1641, 1642, 1643, 1644, 1645, 1646, 1647, 1648, 1649, 1650, 1651, 1652, 1653, 1654, 1655, 1656, 1657, 1658, 1659, 1660, 1661, 1662, 1663, 1664, 1665, 1666, 1667, 1668, 1669, 1670, 1671, 1672, 1673, 1674, 1675, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683, 1684, 1685, 1686, 1687, 1688, 1689, 1690, 1691, 1692, 1693, 1694, 1695, 1696, 1697, 1698, 1699, 1700, 1701, 1702, 1703, 1704, 1705, 1706, 1707, 1708, 1709, 1710, 1711, 1712, 1713, 1714, 1715, 1716, 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1725, 1726, 1727, 1728, 1729, 1730, 1731, 1732, 1733, 1734, 1735, 1736, 1737, 1738, 1739, 1740, 1741, 1742, 1743, 1744, 1745, 1746, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1755, 1756, 1757, 1758, 1759, 1760, 1761, 1762, 1763, 1764, 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, 1773, 1774, 1775, 1776, 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other side of the river, where the Infanta and her ladies often went to gather May-dew. The Prince was admitted into the house and the garden, but the Infanta was in the orchard, and since there was a high wall between, and a door doubly bolted, the Prince climbed this wall and, jumping down from a great height, commenced to run eagerly towards the Princess. But she had seen him and, with a great shriek, fled with all possible speed. The Prince was forced to abandon his efforts to see her, and it must have been with a heart full of discouragement that he wended his way back to the Palace to relate his story to Steenie.

Buckingham was by now growing impatient. It was almost two months since they had arrived in Madrid, and since then nothing had been achieved on either side, whilst annoying delays seemed likely to spread out the negotiations until the end of the year. Apparently, he forgot himself so far as to indicate openly his dislike for the slowness of the proceedings, whereupon he was haughtily rebuked by Olivares, through the medium of a message to the Prince, asking him 'to consider better how great a Prince the King of Spain was when he came to speak in his presence'.¹

On April 27th Buckingham was writing to James, expressing hopes that it would not be long before they were all out of the labyrinth in which they had been entangled these many years. But his hopes seemed futile in view of the copy of the dispensation — 'clogged with conditions' — which accompanied this letter. Apparently, the Pope had asked for general liberty of conscience for all Roman Catholics in Great Britain, whilst the Infanta was to have the education of her children until they had reached the age of twelve. Upon reading this, James fell into a passion

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 153.

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and shrieked with rage, 'What would they have more? Let them suffer me to have my ends, and they shall have my heart. What would they have more?'¹ This cryptic utterance raised some alarm at court, and the nobility began to mutter amongst themselves against Buckingham, upon whom they laid all the blame, and he was threatened with a 'bloody greeting' upon his return.

In Spain there had been a violent encounter between Olivares and Buckingham. The latter was furious that the Prince's visit should have been made an excuse for pressing these new concessions, and so great was the ill feeling which ensued that for two days afterwards the favourites refused to speak to each other. So unpopular was Buckingham becoming with the Spanish grandees that Bristol told James he had heard some of them say, 'they would rather put the Infanta headlong into a well than into his hands'.² Olivares also remarked, whilst censuring Buckingham's great familiarity with the Prince, that 'If the Infanta did not, as soon as she was married, suppress that licence she would herself quickly undergo the mischief of it.'³

But Buckingham's impetuous conduct was far preferable to the duplicity with which the Prince now commenced to deal with the Spaniards. There is no doubt that at this point the Marquis would have preferred to return home, being quite convinced of the obstinacy of the Spaniards and the Pope. But Charles was most unwilling to be balked in his enterprise, and now proceeded to hold out false hopes to the Spanish Commissioners that he would do his best to induce Parliament to agree to a suspension of the penal laws and a confirmation of the marriage articles as quickly as possible. Rashly he placed the length of time this would take as perhaps three or six months, maybe a

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I. vol. III, p. 150.

² CLARENDON, *History of the Rebellion*, I, p. 63.

³ CABALA, p. 95.

year — certainly not more than three years! He must have known perfectly well that the English Parliament would never consent to such conditions, and so did the astute Olivares, when, in a private letter to the King of Spain, he advised him to retain the Infanta in Spain until these promises had actually been put into execution. The other Spanish Councillors, not so clever as Olivares, were inclined to think a little more persuasion of the Prince might be effective and proceeded to make efforts to extract more impossible promises from him. Buckingham tried the effect of his personality upon the Papal Nuncio, but after a three hours' argument came to the conclusion that 'there is now no way to treat for this marriage but with the sword drawn over the Roman Catholics'.¹

It was now very clear that Charles and Buckingham had made the greatest mistake of their lives in coming to Spain. Most of the contingencies which James and Cottington had foreseen had now arisen and daily the position at the Spanish Court was becoming more intolerable. In England James had applied to Williams for his opinion upon the venture — 'Do you think,' he asked, 'that this knight-errant pilgrimage will be likely to win the Spanish lady and convey her shortly into England?' The reply was true up to a point — 'If my Lord Marquis should forget where he is, and not stoop to Olivares, or if Olivares, forgetting what honour he hath just received with the Prince, bear himself haughtily and like a Castilian grandee to my Lord Marquis, the provocation may be dangerous to cross your Majesty's good intentions.'²

Like most of his contemporaries, the Lord Keeper tended to over-estimate Buckingham's part in the breakdown of the negotiations. There can be no doubt that the favourite's

¹ FRANCISCO DE JESUS, *Narrative of the Spanish Marriage Treaty*, p. 230.

² HACKET, *Scrima Reserata*, Part 1, p. 115.

haughty and arrogant manners had irritated the Spaniards beyond all measure, whilst his lack of restraint shocked their rigid sense of propriety. But there were much deeper reasons for the failure.

The Spaniards never lost sight of their dominating passion — the conversion of Great Britain to Catholicism, a singularly futile object! Charles must have been well aware of its futility, yet he chose to remain at the Spanish Court, making one impossible promise after another, in the hopes of winning his desired bride. Against this fruitless and foolish policy Buckingham chafed with an impatience which would naturally not improve his temper. His letters now begin to reveal a consciousness that further negotiations were quite hopeless, and an ardent desire to return to England. Had the Spanish demands been more moderate he would not so readily have been turned from his object, but he saw clearly enough how impossible it would be to obtain liberty of conscience for the English Catholics. He tried to urge Charles to see things in the same light. But it was all in vain. Not even Buckingham's influence could shake Charles's obstinacy now, although he did try the effect of sending a message to Olivares that the Prince intended to leave Madrid immediately to go and consult his father.

Olivares had no intention of allowing Charles to slip through his fingers, and managed to persuade him to remain until his case had been submitted before a Junta of Theologians. On May 23rd — after a little further fencing on both sides — the Junta pronounced its decision. The Infanta was to remain in Spain for a year after the marriage ceremony, within which time all the penal laws in England must be relaxed, and an oath sworn by the British King, Prince and Council that they would never be reimposed, together with the full assent of Parliament to all these pro-

ceedings. It was also hinted that Charles might have possession of his wife at once if he were ready to stay in Spain another year!

When Olivares, with beaming countenance, presented himself before the Prince and Buckingham with these new conditions, Buckingham completely lost his temper and rated the Spaniard and his Court very soundly. Never, he declared, had he known such utter duplicity. Olivares gave him an icy retort, telling him quite frankly that he and Charles had done no good by interfering in the affair and would have done better to have left it to Bristol. His pride deeply wounded, Charles thereupon made up his mind to return to England, but further reflection caused him to change it, and it was decided to dispatch Cottington to James with the full story of these miserable negotiations.

In the meantime the English King's chief occupation consisted of preparing for the reception of the Infanta, and during the intervals of such preparations doing his best to demonstrate his constancy towards his absent favourite by paying very special attention to his domestic concerns. A large fleet was being prepared to go to Spain and bring back the Prince and his bride, and it caused much heart-burning at court when the Earl of Rutland, Buckingham's father-in-law, was chosen above all others for the supreme command. In vain did men look for some signs of abatement in the King's affections for Buckingham. On the contrary, whilst affairs of state occupied an insignificant place in James's mind, such matters as the weaning of Buckingham's child became of paramount importance. In one of his trivial letters to his favourite James was overjoyed to tell him that 'Kate and thy sister supped with me on Saturday night last, and yesterday both dined and supped with me, and so shall do still with God's grace, as long as I am here, and my little grand-chylde with her four

teeth is, God be thanked, well weaned, and they are all very merry.' The King by now thought of Buckingham as his son, often referring to him as his 'bastard brat', and so he lovingly called little Mary Villiers his grandchild, and found great delight in playing with her.¹ On May 3rd the Secretary writes to Buckingham that 'His Majesty came to Hyde Park, at the entry whereof he found a fair lady, indeed the fairest Lady Mary in England, and he made a great deal of love to her, and gave her his watch and kept her as long pleased with him as he could, not without expression to all the company that it was a miracle such an ugly deformed father should have so sweet a child.'²

Further recognition was given to Buckingham's family during his absence when his brother, Christopher Villiers, was created Earl of Anglesey. But an even greater honour, it was whispered, was pending for Buckingham himself. On all sides men talked of a Dukedom for the favourite — it was rumoured that he was to be Duke of Clarence. The King had already written to Buckingham telling him that the Lord Treasurer had been a most importunate suitor on his behalf for this supreme dignity, to which the favourite replied that he wished it to proceed from James freely and not by request, 'for whensoever anything proceeds otherwise than immediately from your own heart and affection, I shall kiss it and then lay it down at your feet again'.³ He also besought the King to create at least one other Duke, for his sake, so as to stop jealous gossip.

James soon determined to bestow this crowning glory upon his favourite. It would increase his prestige at the Spanish Court, for the singularity of the honour distinguished its bearer quite as much as the modern appellation of 'His Royal Highness'. At the moment there was no

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 844.

² GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, II, p. 290.

³ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 414.

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other English Dukedom in existence — with the exception of the Dukedom of York, which title was merged in that of Prince of Wales. The only Scottish nobleman who bore the title was the Duke of Lennox, a near kinsman of the King's, and therefore to avoid any appearance of placing the new Duke above him who had for forty years honourably enjoyed this pre-eminent distinction, the Duke of Lennox was created Earl of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Duke of Richmond on May 17th, and the following day the Marquis of Buckingham was advanced to the titles of Earl of Coventry and Duke of Buckingham.¹

This singular honour satisfied Buckingham highly and the letter of thanks which he wrote to James is a strange compound of pride and humility. 'I can boldly say,' he begins, 'it is not in the power of your large bountiful hand and heart ever hereafter either to increase my duty and love to you or to overvalue myself as you do, by thinking it fit that I should be set so far above my fellows.' Anxious that he should continue supreme in the King's affections he proceeds: 'I am confident you will never love none of your servants (I will be saucy here) better than Steenie.' The letter ends with an acknowledgment of his full measure of thankfulness to the King for both this new honour and all the previous gifts and dignities he had been pleased to bestow: 'You have filled a consuming purse, given me fair houses, more land than I am worthy of, filled my coffers to the full with patents of honour, that my shoulders cannot bear more . . . but you have not been content to rest here but have found out a way which, to my heart's satisfaction, is far beyond all: for with this letter, you have furnished my cabinet with so precious a witness of your valuation of me,

¹ The letters patent for the creation of the Duke of Buckingham, dated Greenwich, May 18th, are printed in RYMER's *Foedera* xvii, 495. The Dukedom became extinct with the death of his son without issue in 1687, since his daughter Mary likewise had no surviving children.

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as in future times it cannot be said that I rise, as most courtiers do, through importunity. For which character of me and incomparable favour from you I will sign with as contented, nay, as proud a heart — Your poor Steenie, Duke of Buckingham.’¹

Buckingham’s family, now in residence at York House, were no doubt delighted by the news of his accession to such a supreme dignity. His absence in Spain was keenly felt by all those most intimately associated with him, and his letters were the most eagerly awaited events. Rutland, his father-in-law, tells the Duke how he was having supper with his wife and sister, when news came that a bearer had arrived with letters from Spain, whereupon ‘they were so impatient to see him that some could eat no meat, and when we did see him and your letter, they were so overjoyed that they forgot to eat: nay, my sweet Moll, as she was undressing, cried nothing but ‘Dad, Dad!’’

Buckingham’s private life seems to have been very happy, he was a tender and indulgent husband and father, and retained to the end the love and affection of a devoted wife. Her chief unhappiness lay in the fact that his exalted position necessitated these frequent and grievous absences, but her quiet faith in his fidelity to her persisted despite the many rumours, so malicious and damaging to his reputation, which constantly flowed into England. His name was even connected, to his detriment, with that of the Countess of Olivares, a woman who, despite her courtesy to him, was far too old and deformed to have appealed to him in any amorous fashion. But the greatness of his wife’s love raised her above such gossip and she was able to affirm, again and again, that ‘there never was a woman loved a man as I do you’, in her letters to her husband.

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 454.

² GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, II, p. 29.



THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM WITH HIS FAMILY
From the portrait by Gerard Honthurst in the National Portrait Gallery
By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

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These letters show Buckingham in a new and intimate light, as a man much beloved in his own little family circle. He took a keen interest in his domestic affairs, and by every post full particulars had to be sent to him concerning the welfare and progress of his little daughter, Moll, who seems to have been a child after her father's own heart, since, although she could not yet walk, she possessed already an inherent sense of rhythm — 'when the saraband is played she will get her thumb and finger together, offering to snap: and then when Tom Duff is sung she will shake her apron, and when she hears the tune of the clapping dance my lady Frances Herbert taught the Prince she will clap both her hands together and on her breast'. It is small wonder that James loved to play with this merry little lady, whose gaiety must have reminded him strongly of his absent favourite.

The same letter which conveyed these entertaining items of news to Buckingham afforded him further proof of the staunch quality of his wife's devotion. The Duchess was sending him some pearls for his personal adornment, and laughingly added that they would never help him to win the ladies' hearts, since he himself was a far greater jewel and, unaided, would win the heart of any lady in the world. Yet she had no fear of his possible infidelity, telling him: 'I am confident it is not in their power to win your heart from a heart that is, was, and ever shall be, yours till death. Everybody tells me how happy I am in a husband and how chaste you are: that you will not look at a woman and yet how they woo you. Sir Francis Cottington was yesterday telling of me how you made a vow not to touch any woman till you saw me — God make me thankful for giving you me!'¹ Balthazar Gerbier, a painter who had proved invaluable to the Duke in many of his artistic transactions,

¹ GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, II, p. 279.

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substantiated in one of his letters this evidence of the Duchess's devotion. He had been forced to complete the large portrait of Buckingham so that she might have it 'as her sweet saint' always near her bed. A miniature of the Duke, which Gerbier had also painted, had found a royal resting place, for in one of his letters James told Buckingham affectionately: 'I have no more to say but that I wear my Steenie's picture in a blue ribbon under my waistcoat next to my heart.'¹ One who could so command the affection of those with whom he came into intimate contact must have been endowed with no small nobility of character, and it is generally admitted, even by his severest critics, that Buckingham's kindness, courtesy and generosity in private life were unbounded. To the King and the Prince he was a genial comrade, to the Duchess a tender and devoted husband, who had placed her in his heart as sole mistress. His affection for those of his own blood transported him beyond all measures of prudence, and in its excess became a fault. His absence in Spain left a space in his domestic circle which could not easily be filled, and many were the importunate requests for his return.

The King especially grieved at the absence of his son and the one who was his son in all but name. The depth of his fondness for Charles and Buckingham, together with his urgent desire that they should conclude the Spanish negotiations and return home, renders more intelligible the strange powers which, at this juncture, he vested in them. On the heels of their previous letter intimating that the dispensation had arrived clogged with conditions, came a curious epistle from Charles himself. 'Sir,' he wrote, 'I do find that if I have not somewhat under your Majesty's hand to show, whereby you engage yourself to do whatsoever I shall promise in your name, that it will retard the business

¹ GOODMAN, II, p. 257.

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a great while; whereby I humbly beseech your Majesty to send me a warrant to this effect: "We do hereby promise by the word of a King, that whatsoever you, our son, shall promise in our name we shall punctually perform." Sir, I confess this is an ample trust that I desire, and if it were not mere necessity I should not be so bold.' Whether two such inexperienced and impetuous beings were competent to wield the full authority of kingship seems to have weighed little with James, in comparison with the affection and trust he reposed in them. So he could not refuse their exorbitant request. 'It were a strange trust that I would refuse to put upon my only son and my best servant,' he fondly replied, 'I know such two as ye are will never promise in my name but what may stand with my conscience, honour and safety and all these I do fully trust to any one of you two.'¹

These were brave words, but the King must have felt a growing anxiety at the delay. In spite of his affectionate letter to the Infanta, expressing his longing for the happiness of her presence, the Prince's ship, elaborately fitted as if to receive a goddess, still lay in dock and Rutland's fleet awaited orders to sail. The elusive lady showed no eagerness to visit our shores. In the meantime the populace openly expressed their dislike of the Spaniard, and even James himself, reports a Venetian, perforce exclaimed, when speaking of the chapel he was to build for the Infanta, 'We are building a temple to the devil!'

Yet, stifling his forebodings, the King briskly proceeded with the preparations for the Infanta's reception. St. James's Palace was being enlarged, a chapel added, and all the rooms were to be refurnished, the present furniture being altogether too mean in quality for Their Highnesses.

The Lord Chamberlain remarks, 'the expense will be

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, pp. 417, 419.

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heavy' — more he dare not say, but more than one voice must have been heard to mutter against this extravagance in times when the Crown, at any rate, had fallen into poverty. In addition, Durham House was to be fitted up for the Spanish grandees, and remembering the glorious reception the Spaniards had given his two boys the King was anxious that all should be fitting in England. He frequently visited the buildings himself to inspect what had been done, whilst Hamilton, Middlesex, Pembroke and Richmond were dispatched to Southampton to see that all preparations were made for the Princess's arrival. By May 26th Rutland had received orders to leave for Spain, and only a contrary wind — a fortunate one, as it turned out — prevented his immediate departure.

On June 14th two important personages arrived at Dover — the Marquis of Inijosa, who had been sent from Spain as extraordinary ambassador, and Sir Francis Cottington, bearing the Prince's wretched tidings to his father. Inijosa was received at Dover, where coaches had been awaiting him for eight days. As he disembarked he was saluted by the guns of Rutland's fleet and by the Castle artillery. At Barham Downs he was met by Sir Dudley Digges and a troop of knights and gentlemen who, after a mutual exchange of compliments, escorted him as far as Canterbury. In the Cathedral city he was magnificently received by the Mayor and his brethren, handsomely attired in scarlet gowns, whilst a band had been engaged in order to give an air of festivity to the occasion. The mayoral equipage escorted him to his lodging, and gave him a guard of twenty men in livery — no doubt he needed it, for the temper of the people must have been at boiling point!

Meanwhile, Cottington's steed was bearing him with all haste to Greenwich, where he arrived that same evening, and appearing before the King, poured out the whole

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miserable history of the past four weeks. The recital realized James's worst apprehensions. As he listened to the story of the debates in the Junta, the decision to keep the Infanta for another year, the full extent of the folly of this rash undertaking must have become clearly visible to him. But he was dealt a crowning blow by the suggestion that Charles might, if he wished, stay an extra year in Madrid. In the abandonment of his grief, he seized his pen and wrote impetuously: 'My sweet Boys, your letter by Cottington hath stricken me dead. I fear it shall very much shorten my days, and I am the more perplexed that I know not how to satisfy the people's expectation here neither know I what to say to our Council for the fleet that must be stayed, and I know not what reason I shall pretend for the doing of it. But as for my advice and directions that ye crave in case they will not alter their decree, it is, in a word, to come speedily away if ye can get leave, and give over all treaty. And this I speak without respect of any security they can offer you, except ye never look to see your old dad again, whom I fear ye shall never see, if ye see him not before winter. Alas! I now repent me sore that ever I suffered you to go away. I care for match, nor nothing, so that I may have you in my arms again. God grant it! God grant it! God grant it! Amen! Amen! Amen! . . . God bless you both, my only sweet son and my only best sweet servant and God send you a happy and joyful meeting in the arms of your dear dad.'¹

The headstrong young men in Spain now completely filled the King's horizon — England counted for nothing, and, with a magnificent disregard for her sturdy nationalism, James proceeded to bargain away the very breath of her body to secure the safety of the Prince, who was certainly in no danger, beyond that of his own folly. The

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 421.

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King, Conway was instructed to write to Buckingham, would ratify the obnoxious marriage-articles and the marriage could proceed by proxy if only Charles and he would return home immediately. Whether James ever realized that he was, in effect, agreeing to the re-establishment of Roman Catholicism on an official basis in Great Britain is doubtful. In all fairness to him, we must remember that he was growing old, he had suffered terrible anxiety for some months, and was in ill health bodily, so that his customary prudence forsook him at this point, and he was ready to fling all to the winds to secure a sight of his beloved Baby Charles and Steenie.

Of all this none but Conway and the King knew for some time. The staying of the fleet was put down to an unavoidable delay, but the absence of all news told its own story. 'This deep silence tells of bad news to understanding ears,' writes a Venetian. 'His Majesty seems melancholy, and is upset by anything, and one may call him incapable of either consolation or counsel.'¹ There seemed to be a general feeling that Charles and Buckingham had bungled the whole affair. The King tried to smile and go about as usual, but this same observant Venetian saw his efforts only as 'art and dissimulation', noticing that as the time passed his condition bordered upon stupidity. By now James had become obsessed by the notion that he would never see his beloved son again in this life, and, it is said, broke down and wept passionately in the presence of his personal servants.

Whilst his father was eating out his heart in fruitless remorse, Charles occupied his time in trying to change the mind of the Spanish Government — a singularly futile task. For once, he worked alone, except for the advice of Bristol, which was usually too sensible to appeal to him. Bucking-

¹ Valaresso to the Doge, May 26th, 1623, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1623-25), p. 23.

ham, it will be noticed, had ceased to play an active part in the negotiations. By the beginning of July it was common talk at the Spanish Court that the whole affair was under the control of Bristol. Buckingham was, apparently, thoroughly disgusted with the Spaniards, condemning their proceedings root and branch, and declaring them guilty of the grossest duplicity. For once, Buckingham could see clearly. He objected principally to the demand for liberty of conscience accompanying the dispensation, feeling that the Spaniards were breaking their word. His distrust was complete, he realized the uselessness of further debate, and voiced his feelings so openly that Charles, it is said, was driven to remonstrate with him for his 'harsh methods'.¹ Perhaps this sobered Buckingham a little, since quarrel with the Prince even he dared not, so he prepared to wait patiently, if disapprovingly, for the end of these tedious negotiations. But his position was unenviable. He was cordially disliked at the Spanish Court, on account of his violent temper, and he had had a sharp altercation with Olivares. The two favourites had almost come to the point of a duel — poor James would have shed a bitter tear at the thought of his beloved Steenie at the end of a Spaniard's rapier — but common sense had made them patch up the breach, at least outwardly. Yet beneath the surface resentment still smouldered, serving only to add fresh complications to an already bewildering situation.

¹ Corner to the Doge, July 1st, 1623, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1623-25), p. 51.

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THE situation in Spain must have been galling to the hearts of the growing body of Protestant patriots in England. This foolish undertaking had led the nation into a most humiliating position abroad, and made her the laughing stock of foreign countries. Whichever way she now moved it seemed impossible to save her honour and dignity. The vicissitudes of the past few months' diplomacy had resulted in a deadlock from which there was no easy way out. If James were to accept the marriage articles — as he had already intimated his readiness to do — he would be making an impossible promise, and once Parliament were summoned to ratify the Roman Catholic demands the outcome was a foregone conclusion. England would rise against her King. Olivares had foreseen this when he had offered a Spanish army to suppress such a rebellion. On the other hand, to refuse to accept the marriage articles meant that Charles must make a humiliating return home, balked in his main object. The next move was fraught with difficulty, as Charles himself must have realized, and so with characteristic indecisiveness he decided to let the present stalemate prevail for a few more weeks, at any rate, hoping against hope that the Spanish theologians might miraculously change their minds.

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be overridden and the Infanta on her way to England. In consequence James was to lose no time in putting into effect the favours required towards the Roman Catholics. For the rest, we will let Charles speak for himself: 'We send you the articles as they are to go, the oaths private and public you and your Baby are to take, and the Council's oath. If you scare at the least clause of your private oath (wherein you swear that Parliament shall revoke all the penal laws against the Papists in three years) we thought it good to tell you that if you *think* you may do it in that time, if you do your best and it take not effect you have not broken your word. This promise is only a security that you will do your best.'¹ Already Charles was showing that duplicity which, nearly twenty years later, was to lead him to the scaffold.

Olivares, knowing that unless the Prince were converted — which he now realized to be hopeless — this marriage would be most distasteful both to the Infanta and the people of Spain, was now playing a waiting game, hoping to put off the Prince by making impossible demands upon his religion. Imagine his consternation, therefore, when on July 7th the Prince appeared before the King of Spain declaring that he had resolved to accept with his whole heart what had been proposed to him, both as to the articles touching religion and as to the security required. Probably Charles was following the line of advice he had already offered to his father, and thought it easy enough afterwards to wriggle out of these promises.

But for the moment his acceptance was received without question at the Spanish Court, the Infanta was spoken of generally as the Princess of England and even allowed to appear in public. The joyful news, together with a request that the King and Council should take the oath to ratify

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 419.

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the articles, was sent to England by Lord Andover. Charles now imagined that once he could secure these two oaths the Spaniards would forget all about the Parliamentary ratification. Never was a Prince more misguided. The astute Olivares had a very clear conception of the part played by the British Parliament in the constitution and was playing with the Prince as a cat with a mouse.

Meanwhile in England James was spending his time arguing with either his conscience or his Council. He could not forget the ever present horror of his son's remaining in captivity in Spain, and eventually decided to agree to the marriage. On Sunday, July 20th, at a public ceremony in the Royal Chapel at Whitehall, James officially declared his acceptance of the marriage articles.

He could have done nothing more inimical to the principle of toleration. By placing the relaxation of the penal laws upon the basis of a bargain with a hated foreign power, James had dealt the vigorous spirit of the new era a sharp rebuff. All the old religious fanaticism was reinforced, and the gentler spirit of rationalism became too dangerously synonymous with anti-nationalism to be popular. In England men spoke of the Spaniards in no measured terms, and we are told how on one occasion when James had exultantly declared that all the devils in hell could not now hinder the marriage; a nobleman remarked to his neighbour that there were none left there, since all had gone to Spain to conclude this match.

The sentiments of the nation were finally voiced in a letter, written in the name of Archbishop Abbot, but generally said to be a forgery. This outspoken epistle assured the King that whenever and however the Prince should return, the authors of this madcap adventure would surely be punished by the proper authorities. In fateful words it spoke of the toleration James now endeavoured to

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set up for the Roman Catholics — 'It cannot be done without a Parliament unless your Majesty will let your subjects see that you now take unto yourself a liberty to throw down the laws of the land at your pleasure. What dreadful consequences these things may draw after, I beseech your Majesty to consider.'¹ The majority of the country held the same views, and already a national party was beginning to appear in opposition to the King and his followers.

Most of this was kept back from the Prince and Buckingham in Spain, and in his next letter to them on July 21st the King merely grumbles about the retention of the Infanta in Spain, which will necessitate the sending of two fleets — one for the Prince and one for the Infanta the following year. His chief complaint is on the score of the expense — 'If they will not send her till March,' he writes, 'let them, in God's name, send her by their own fleet, and forget not to make them keep their former conditions anent the portion, otherwise both my Baby and I are bankrupt for ever.'²

By now Olivares realized that nothing could apparently check Charles's ardour for the marriage, and accordingly he changed his tactics, bringing pressure to bear on the Infanta to accept her handsome Prince, now so deeply in love with her, and thereby achieve the glorious task of converting Britain. July 25th saw the signing of the marriage contract, after Charles had taken his most impossible vows, to which no English Parliament would ever agree. But fate now interposed another delay in the death of the Pope, and the ratification of the new Pope must be awaited. It was not, however, supposed that this would be difficult to obtain.

The next letter from Spain is written in Buckingham's hand, but there is no doubt that he was merely the mouth-

¹ CABALA, p. 108.

² HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 428.

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piece of Charles's ideas, and had perforce to lend his signature to sentiments which he did not echo. The colourful optimism of this letter is that of Charles: 'We can now tell you certainly that, by the 29th of your August, we shall begin our journey and hope to bring her with us . . . we have already convinced the Condé of Olivares in this point that it is fit the Infanta come with us before winter. He is working under-hand with the divines, and, under colour of the King's and Prince's journey, makes preparations for hers also. Her household is a-settling, and all the things for her journey: and the Condé's own words are he will throw us all out of Spain as soon as he can.'¹ The request, 'to send us peremptory commands to come away', with which the letter ends is probably the only one which came straight from the heart of Buckingham. He longed most passionately to return, even though he knew that his enemies were awaiting him in England, and that he was universally condemned as the author of all the recent misfortune. Under the guise of friendship, a certain James Wadsworth wrote him a letter revealing the malicious gossip which centred around his conduct in Spain: 'It is reported against you that you sometimes used the Prince disrespectfully, carrying too hard a hand over him, urging or exercising your commission too rigorously, causing him to say and do some things which otherwise he would not do. That you sat in his chamber at the same table with him, yea, in indecent manner without breeches, only with your nightgown, and in public places at the feasts stood with your back towards the Infanta. That in the main business you proceeded with much passion and choler, and not with prudence or discretion. That you were very inconstant, to-day saying one thing, to-morrow another, so that they durst not rely on you.'² This writer was a malicious

¹ HARDWICKER, *State Papers*, I, p. 432. ² GOODMAN, *Court of King James*, II, p. 314.

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and unprincipled renegade, but there is no doubt that the news he so venomously related was on the lips of everyone in England and in Spain. The Spaniards by now detested the Duke, and blamed him for preventing their much desired conversion of the Prince.

It is true that Buckingham did conduct himself with what seemed an audacious familiarity towards the Prince, but we, who are able to read the undignified and garrulous letters which were written to him by the King himself, are in a better position to understand this conduct which appeared so disrespectful to the staid and conventional Spanish grandees. The violence of his temper, which seems to have won him no small degree of dislike, most probably proceeded from the consciousness that the Spaniards were duping the Prince to serve their own ends. On July 30th he privately expressed his dissatisfaction with the whole negotiations in a letter to James. Apparently the Duke had been prevailed upon by Charles to pay a personal visit to Olivares and plead his cause, that he might bring the Infanta away before the spring. In this interview he advanced the considerations of James's own peace of mind and general health and happiness, the popularity of the Infanta with the British people, the general state of affairs in Christendom, and, lastly, his own 'poor particular cause', since he was already laid open to enough malice at home without bringing the Prince back bound by a contract, but with no tangible result. Olivares listened to this long recital with many muttered grumblings, but finally declared himself bewitched by Buckingham's advocacy, although the Duke allows himself to doubt that 'if there was a witch in the company, I am sure there was a devil too'. Buckingham had also tried the effects of his personal charms and persuasiveness upon the Condessa of Olivares — who seems to have liked the English favourite — and the

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Infanta herself, the result of which was a message from the Condessa that 'the King, the Infanta, and the Condé are the best contented that can be; and that he should not now doubt his soon going away and to carry the Infanta with him.'¹

Already on August 4th Rutland had received his orders from Secretary Conway to set sail, with extravagant prayers that his return journey might be blessed with 'a wind like a lover's embracements, neither too strong nor too slack, and a sea as smooth as a lady's face so embraced.'² So when, on August 10th, the letter from Buckingham reached James, promising their return, and possibly with the Infanta, he was beside himself with joy and wrote imperatively that they were to return at once, with or without that lady, 'for you must prefer the obedience ye bear to a father to the love ye carry to a mistress.'³

But the tortuous history of this tangled diplomacy was again ploughing its course through the mire of further checks and counter-checks. Buckingham's fear that a devil lurked in the company was assuredly being realized, for now it appeared that the Spanish King utterly refused to give up his sister before the spring, but declared that, if Charles pleased, he might marry her now and remain in Spain, returning home to England the following year. No doubt, by that time, he was hoping the Infanta might become a mother, and he would have a double security, in another heir to the English throne, for the enforcement of his demands.

Even now Charles, weak and obstinate, could not come to any definite decision. As may be imagined, Buckingham was thoroughly enraged and even spoke of starting out to meet Rutland's fleet and returning home alone. In the end,

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 433.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, p. 28.

³ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 447.

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the general feeling of the Prince's attendants, who were one and all disgusted with this fresh evidence of Spanish treachery, resulted in an episode which brought matters to a head. It so happened that one of the Prince's attendants had fallen sick, and, knowing that he was dying, sent for a Roman Catholic Priest that he might receive the sacraments of the Roman Church. Whereupon, some of the Prince's servants blocked the entrance to the dying man's room, and forcibly prevented the priest from entering. There was an open affray, and Sir Edmund Verney struck the clergyman in the face. Although the Prince apologized and ordered Verney to leave Madrid, this was not enough for Philip, who issued orders for the instant dismissal of all the English Protestants, if Charles wished to remain.

The position had become beyond even Charles's obstinate endurance, and, making a virtue of necessity, the Prince and Duke conveyed to the King their intention to return immediately, gaily glossing over the miserable story of the trickery to which Charles had been all but ready to submit. 'The cause,' they wrote, 'why we have been so long in writing to you since Cottington's coming is that we would try all means possible, before we would send you word, to see if we could move them to send the Infanta before winter. They, for form's sake, called the divines and they stick to their old resolution, but we find, from the circumstances, that conscience is not the true, but the seeming, cause of the Infanta's stay. To conclude, we have wrought what we can but since we cannot have her with us that we desired, our next comfort is that we hope shortly to kiss your Majesty's hands.'¹ Thus miserably ended the gay adventure of these two 'sweet knights worthy to be put in a new romanso'. Seldom had a romance proved so tedious!

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 449.

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The verdict of contemporaries laid the chief share of the blame for the failure of the negotiations upon the shoulders of Buckingham. Even Bristol, who knew every turn and twist the diplomacy had taken, placed a large part of the onus of failure upon Buckingham, and on August 29th conveyed his opinions to James in language which he knew well might cost him his head. 'The truth is,' he writes, 'that this King and his ministers are grown to have so high a dislike of my lord Duke of Buckingham, and on the one side to judge him to have so much power with your Majesty and the Prince, and, on the other side, to be so ill affected to them and their affairs, that unless your Majesty be pleased in your wisdom either to find some means of reconciliation, or else to let them see and be assured that it shall no way be in my Lord of Buckingham's power to make the Infanta's life less happy unto her, or any way to cross and embroil the affairs betwixt your Majesties and your Kingdoms, I am afraid your Majesty will see the effects which you have just cause to expect from this alliance to follow but slowly and all the great businesses now in treaty prosper but ill. For I must, for the discharge of my conscience and duty, without descending to particulars, let your Majesty truly know that suspicions and distastes betwixt them all here and my Lord of Buckingham cannot be at a greater height.'¹

But however great the hostility aroused by Buckingham in the breasts of the Spanish grandees, the verdict of history relieves him of the chief burden of responsibility for the failure of these negotiations at the Spanish Court. The Spaniards had played a crooked game all along the line, fearing the hostility of both the House of Austria and the House of Stuart — and thereby running the risk of incurring both. That Philip had no intention, nor,

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 476.

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indeed, any power to effect the restitution of the Palatinate, was tolerably clear to everyone save the infatuated Prince and his visionary father. During the Prince's visit Olivares had, in an unguarded moment, allowed his real convictions to pierce the veil of falsehood he had so elaborately woven. Charles had declared to him that, should negotiations for peace in Europe fail, the Spanish King would surely be willing to assist Frederick's cause with his army. He must have received a sharp rebuff when Olivares replied frankly, 'Even if the Emperor were to give the King a blow in the face and to call him a knave, it would be impossible for his Majesty to abandon him or become his enemy. If he can preserve the friendship of the King of England as well as that of the Emperor, well and good. But if not, we ought to break with England even if we had a hundred Infantas married there.'¹

On another occasion, when all seemed to be going well, Olivares said good humouredly to the Prince and Duke: 'Now certainly it must be a match, and the devil himself could not break it.' At this Buckingham sardonically replied that 'he thought so too, and that the match had need be firm and strong, it had been seven years in the soldering'.² Throwing discretion to the winds, Olivares proceeded to tell them that it had not been seriously intended in Spain for more than the last seven months and even went so far as to show them Philip's letter, which required him to put an end to the negotiations. To make matters worse, the Prince learned from this communication that apparently not only the present, but also the past King of Spain had been strongly averse to the proposed union.³

The Spaniards have not escaped censure for what

¹ GARDINER, v, p. 106.

² Buckingham's relation to Parliament, *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 226.

³ See above, p. 83 f.

appeared to be the vilest trickery. But it must be remembered that the whole idea of settling the affairs of Europe by a marriage contract had originated in the fertile imagination of James. Probably both Charles and his father tacitly assumed that, once the match were concluded, Philip would prefer a complete reversal of the hereditary policy of Spain to a war against his own brother-in-law. But Philip's nepotism had not the force of James's, and the Spanish King made it clear that nothing definite could be promised about the Palatinate — Spain was willing to do her best to negotiate, but failing this, could not draw the sword against her ancient ally and co-religionist. It was as likely that the British Parliament would tolerate a repeal of the penal laws, as that the Spanish people would countenance an alliance with Protestant England against Catholic Austria.

With a greater sagacity than most of his contemporaries, Bristol had recognized these facts and it was therefore in an endeavour to ease the troubled state of Christendom that he had declared himself ready to meet the Catholic powers half way and to consent to the education of Frederick's son at the Imperial Court in Vienna as a necessary condition of his father's restoration to the Palatinate. The wisdom of Bristol's views was not recognized by Charles and Buckingham, who later brought them against him in the House of Lords. Yet Charles made no attempt to review the situation clearly. Blinded by what he imagined to be passionate love, he desired to marry the Infanta above all things, but chose to be deeply wounded in his pride on finding that Philip was neither able, nor willing, to partition Europe to the advantage of his family fortunes. Throughout the negotiations there had been a mass of misunderstandings on both sides, each sanguinely imagining he could achieve his own ends by hoodwinking

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the other. There is no doubt that Charles's arrival in Madrid had complicated the issue, but even had the negotiations been left entirely to the ambassadors it is more than likely that the interests of Spain and England were too diametrically opposed for such an alliance to be practicable. At any rate, as we pursue the story of these Spanish negotiations, it becomes increasingly evident that the impetuous conduct of Buckingham, though it irritated the Spaniards and probably created fresh difficulties, was by no means the ultimate reason for the breakdown.

At this point Buckingham's unhappiness at his prolonged absence, together with the galling sense that they had all been miserably outwitted, combined to produce in him an ill-health which was to recur after his return to England. His constitution does not appear to have been too robust, and his highly strung nervous system rendered him peculiarly susceptible to sharp attacks of ague, accompanied by colds which had in their nature something of a high fever. Such an attack laid its grip upon him now, so that on August 20th Charles wrote to his father in his own hand that he 'would not let his Dog trouble himself with writing' since he was still indisposed and suffering from the after effects of the feverish chill. With his vigour at a low ebb, Buckingham now desired to regain his native land as quickly as possible and as soon as he was well enough he wrote to James, assuring him of his recovery and his ardent desire to see his beloved master once again. Their failure to bring home the Infanta was evidently a sharp thorn in his side, but he went on to assure James that their decision to return had not been lightly taken. How exuberant was his delight at the thought of being once more in the King's presence only his own language can adequately convey, and even then it seems that words had almost failed him: 'My very soul dances for joy,' he declared, 'for the change

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will be no less than to leap from trouble to ease, from sadness to mirth, nay, from hell to heaven. My thoughts are only bent upon having my dear Dad and Master's legs soon in my arms.' But in the midst of all his joy he still had the miserable sense of frustration: 'Sir, I'll bring all things with me you have desired, except the Infanta, which hath almost broken my heart, because yours, your son's and the nation's honour is touched by the miss of it: but since it is their fault here, and not ours, we will bear it the better.'¹ It may well be imagined that this intimately personal letter from the one whom he adored with so strong a passion would produce in James a mood of melting clemency and a violent impatience to see his gay, inconsequent and singularly lovable young favourite once more. Unfortunately, the Spanish proceedings had not revealed to James the patent fact that whilst his Steenie might be the most excellent of courtiers, the gayest and most endearing of companions, his abilities as a statesman and diplomatist were strangely lacking. It was misfortune, rather than fortune, for Buckingham that, upon his return, his royal master's weakness allowed him to wield a power for which he was by nature totally unqualified.

In the meantime, Charles was busy making his adieux to the ever polite Spaniards. September 9th was the official date fixed for their departure, and on August 29th the formal leave taking took place. The King wore deep black to express his professed sorrow at the Prince's departing, whilst the Prince himself maintained a similar sobriety by wearing no jewels. So great was the surge of spectators that the guard had to be called into action to keep them back. The Queen, the Infanta, and all the court ladies were present, and the Prince first took his leave of the Infanta privately in French, without the services of an interpreter.

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, pp. 448, 451.

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The formal leave taking in Spanish followed, and lasted half an hour, Charles assuring the Princess that he would give the Catholics his full protection, taking especial care that they should no longer be persecuted.

There was an exchange of rich gifts and jewels on all sides, and, in spite of his dissatisfaction and general unpopularity, Buckingham gave suits of apparel and two beautiful diamond crosses to two of Olivares' servants.

On Saturday, August 30th, the whole court came to the Palace of the Escorial, whose wonders were displayed to the English visitors. They could not but admire the beauty of its spacious halls, its wonderful library, its secluded gardens and cloistered walks. Indeed, many of the English nobles were afterwards heard to remark that it deserved the title of the 'Eighth Wonder of the World'. Anxious to feast the Prince royally to the very end, the King had arranged many masques for his entertainment and far into the night the strains of music were heard in the gaily illumined gardens of the Escorial.

The formal leave taking of Charles and the King of Spain took place in a little field near the Escorial, and a pillar was later erected to commemorate the spot.¹ The farewell was accompanied by the most affectionate demonstrations on all sides, but Buckingham was not present at these ceremonies. Indeed, a few hours earlier, he had had but a stormy parting with Olivares. It was ever Buckingham's custom to hit straight from the shoulder and declare to his enemy the full extent of his displeasure. Never do we find him professing fair intentions whilst directing an underhand blow. On this occasion he told Olivares that he was obliged to the King, Queen and the Infanta in an eternal tie of gratitude, and that he would be an everlasting servant to them

¹ 'The joyful return of the most illustrious Prince Charles from the Court of Spain.' Trans. from a pamphlet in Spanish by Andrea de Mendoza. Printed in NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 907.

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and endeavour to do his best offices for concluding the match and strengthening the amity between the two crowns. But as for himself, he had so far disobliged him that he could not, without flattery, make the least profession of friendship to him. Olivares accepted the rebuff squarely, and replied in curt tones that he appreciated what he had spoken. Thereupon Buckingham, after taking his leave of the King, set off alone on horseback by his own wish, although the heat of the sun was very excessive, on the pretext of going to find the English fleet which was now due at Santander. With such a parting fresh in their memory the Spaniards were now fully prepared to find the Duke using all his efforts in England towards the frustration of the match, and according to a Venetian at the court of Spain his 'evil disposition to this crown'¹ was the principal topic of conversation after his departure.

The Prince soon joined his friend and together they rode towards the seaport of Santander. Early one morning, when they were only about six miles away from their destination, a messenger met them, bearing the joyous news of the arrival of Rutland's fleet. Whereupon Charles gazed at him, as he afterwards expressed it, 'as upon one who had the face of an angel'.² The Duke of Buckingham's joy burst all bounds, and after kissing the bearer he drew from his finger a diamond ring worth more than a hundred pounds and gave it to him as a present.

On Sunday, September 14th, Charles gave a farewell banquet to the Spanish grandees who had accompanied him to Santander on board his vessel *The Prince*, and four days later the anchors were weighed and the swelling sails courted the breeze in all their white splendour, praying it to speed them on their journey. The Spaniards stood upon

¹ Corner to the Doge, Nov. 6th, 1623, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1623-25), p. 144.

² NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I.* III, p. 909.

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the shore, the Prince, Buckingham, and all the other English nobles on deck, expressing their farewells in dumb show. And so we leave the Prince and his company to the wings of the prosperous winds which were to bear them safely to the English shore.

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AFTER seven days at sea, on a Sunday afternoon in early October, the Prince and Buckingham with their retinue landed at Portsmouth, thankful to be on English soil again. They had brought with them an ambassador extraordinary from Spain in the person of Mendoza, for the marriage negotiations were not considered to be abandoned, despite the fact that the Prince had returned empty handed. Full powers of proxy had been left behind with the Earl of Bristol, and the marriage was to be concluded as soon as the Papal ratification should arrive. But for the general populace it was enough that Charles had come back unaccompanied by the hated Spanish Infanta, and great were the rejoicings on all sides. The Duke of Buckingham was hailed by one and all as the saviour of the nation. He found a new and quite unexpected role awaiting him — that of popular hero — and he discovered it singularly satisfactory.

Immediately they landed the Prince and Buckingham set off Londonwards with all possible speed, but were forced to rest for the night at Lord Annan's house near Guildford, whence they proceeded early next morning to York House, where they held an informal and secret council meeting. The Spanish Ambassador, with most pressing importunity, had demanded an audience and been summarily denied. From York House the two 'adventurous knights' sped to Royston, where an eager James awaited them. From a window he espied them approaching and in his impatience to be with them proceeded as quickly as his

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infirm old legs would carry him down the stairs, where he met them. The Prince and the Duke immediately fell upon their knees, and the King, bending towards them, embraced them heartily, and all three wept together — tears of joy for this delightful and long-awaited reunion. After a while they retired into the King's private suite, shutting out their retinue, who nevertheless seem to have remained within earshot, hoping to catch something of the conversation. The eavesdroppers, however, heard but little — 'sometime a still voice, and then a loud, sometime they laughed and sometime they chafed'. At supper the outcome of the mysterious interview was made quite clear, for James professed himself satisfied that nothing had been achieved by the visit, since he now saw distinctly that the Spaniards had never intended the restitution of the Palatinate, without which he had no desire to negotiate, for 'he liked not to marry his son with a portion of his daughter's tears'.¹

On the way to Royston the Prince had been met everywhere by a rejoicing populace. 'I have not heard of more demonstrations of public joy than were here and everywhere: and from the highest to the lowest,' writes a contemporary. Tables were set out in the street, groaning under all manner of food, with whole hogsheads of wine and butts of sack, whilst every street corner had its bonfire. At Blackheath there were forty loads of wood in one fire. So maddened with joy were the people, that if they chanced to meet a cart laden with wood, they took out the horses, and then set fire to the cart and its load.² Taylor, the Water Poet, aptly observes that even the elements seemed to take part in the general rejoicings. 'The four elements, fire, water, air and earth seemed to applaud the celebration of this happy and welcome day: for the heavens most abun-

¹ HACKET, *Scrinia Reserata*, Part 1, p. 165.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, p. 93.

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dantly poured down a shower of rain of nine hours' continuance, which the dry and thirsty earth drank most greedily, or as I may say, most lovingly, to the health of so joyful and auspicious a solemnity.'¹ At St. Paul's there was a solemn service, where a new anthem was sung — the 14th Psalm: 'When Israel came out of Egypt, and the House of Jacob from the barbarous people.' But those who had the greatest cause for rejoicing at the Prince's return were certain condemned prisoners, whose cart, carrying them to Tyburn, had chanced to cross Charles's path, whereupon he graciously reprieved them and they were all set at liberty.

'The Duke of Buckingham's carriage in all the business is much applauded and commended,' says a news writer. Rumour had it that only the Duke's impatience had prevented the marriage from taking place on Christmas Day. So Buckingham was regarded generally as the deliverer of the nation from Spanish bondage, and verses were composed congratulating him upon dissipating the general fear, and, like the Prince's good genius, bringing him safely home. The anti-Spanish feeling was fostered by the stories which many of the English noblemen, newly returned from Spain, now began to spread abroad. They denounced the Spanish grandees violently, declaiming them as full of penury and proud beggary. A contemporary, in reflective vein, remarks: 'This journey hath wrought one unexpected effect, that whereas it was thought the Spaniards and we should piece and grow together, it seems we are generally more disjointed and further asunder in affections than ever.'²

On October 30th the Prince, the Duke, and Secretary Calvert came up to London, to determine the future line of policy to be pursued with regard to the Spanish negotia-

¹ SOMERS, *Tracts*, II, p. 552. ² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, pp. 103-105.

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tions. The following day the Duke called a very secret meeting of a few selected councillors at St. James's Palace, where he made a relation of the extent to which their visit had helped to throw light upon the marriage proceedings. By now the Prince and Buckingham were strongly in favour of a definite breach with Spain. They represented to the Council the necessity of calling a Parliament in order to break off the negotiations completely. Buckingham had tasted of popularity and found it very sweet. So, pursuing his new role, he now advocated that it was the right of the people to be consulted on a matter of such importance. Once they learnt of the fraudulent proceedings of the Spaniard, the King's integrity and justice in withdrawing from the contract would be apparent to them. Already Buckingham had visions of himself, mounted high upon the wings of the popular affection, as the arch-enemy of the detested power of Spain.

In their relations of the proceedings to the Council, the Prince and Duke had laid the onus of the breakdown of negotiations upon the shoulders of the Earl of Bristol, who was now in Spain and having as sorry a time as could be imagined. The Spaniards had no reason to suppose that the Prince's word was anything but his bond, and all preparations for the marriage by proxy were going on apace. The Infanta was learning to speak English and publicly took the title of Princess of England, being acknowledged as such by both Aston and Bristol. Only one more dispatch from Rome was necessary and the marriage could take place. But, it was whispered, a certain Clerk, one of Buckingham's servants, was reported to have come to Bristol's house as soon as the Prince had gone, and it was generally feared that he had brought something with him to upset all calculations.

These apprehensions were only too well founded. To

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comfort.¹ He pointed out that the negotiations were proceeding in quite a straightforward manner, that there was no reason to despair of Spanish aid in the restitution of the Palatinate, and that to proceed amicably was infinitely preferable to withholding the proxy, which would only occasion distrust and perhaps kindle the flames of war. After dispatching this letter Bristol confidently allowed the preparations for the solemnization of the marriage to proceed, the day was appointed, and a terrace, covered with tapestry, was raised from the King's palace to the adjacent church. All the chief noblemen and their ladies had been invited, when four messengers — Killigree, Gresley, Wood and Davies — arrived from England, bearing James's answer to Bristol. The Earl was commanded not to deliver the proxy until he had obtained full and absolute satisfaction for the surrender of the Palatinate, under the hand and seal of the Spanish King.

Recognizing that such a demand virtually ended the negotiations, Bristol proceeded to acquaint Philip with James's request, and received the answer he had anticipated. Philip declared that such an absolute promise of restitution was not in his power to give — he might treat with the Emperor, but could not command him. But by now the Prince, James and Buckingham had firmly taken their stand — either the marriage was to be accompanied by the restitution of the Palatinate or it would not take place at all. As Charles so naively explained to Bristol, James, having but two children, would be loth that one of them should have cause to weep when the other had reason to laugh. In vain did Bristol pour out his advice to James in letter after letter. Every day Buckingham and the Prince were urging the King to make the restitution of the Palatinate the indispensable condition

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 483.

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of the marriage, knowing full well that no surer method could be pursued for creating a breach with Spain. In their present frame of mind nothing could be so desirable as war, but James was loth to abandon his position as a mediator in Europe, and even now fondly imagined that after dealing Spain this violent insult he could retain the friendship of the Spanish King.

This probably accounts for the fact that on November 18th we find Buckingham in London, preparing a great feast at York House to entertain Don Diego de Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador, and his followers of quality. But, remarks a contemporary, he seemed to be giving the entertainment rather *pro forma* than *ex animo*.¹ The other Spanish Ambassador, Inijosa, was to have been present, but a slight difference of opinion had occurred between him and Mendoza, so that the Duke sent three large baskets of provisions round to his house by Endymion Porter, together with the message, 'that the Duke kissed his hands and would have held it an honour and a happiness to have had his company, but since he would not have it, he desired him to taste of what he had provided for him, and that at the tasting of it at his supper he would be pleased to drink to the health of the King of England, as he himself would do at the same time to the King of Spain'. Inijosa contented himself by remarking that the Duke might have had the pleasure of his company had he pleased to command it, and that 'it was easy to conceive what the feast would be when a taste of it was so rare and plentiful'. He gave Porter fifty crowns, and after bidding the company good night retired to sup privately in his own chamber. Buckingham, who had been reproached by the King for his scant courtesy to the Spanish Ambassadors since his return, had evidently set out to surpass himself. The supper was

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, p. 103.

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excellent and was followed by a masque, after which there was a magnificent banquet. A news writer notes 'the superabundant plenty of the feast, where twelve pheasants were piled in a dish; there were forty dozen partridges et sic de caeteris in all kinds of provisions. The banquet cost £300'.¹

But James's efforts to preserve amity were singularly vain and the end of November saw the virtual abandonment of the match at the Spanish Court. The King of Spain could not stomach such a patent insult as had been dealt him in the delaying of the proxy, so the temporary terrace along which the Infanta was to have walked from the Palace to the Church was dismantled, the English teachers were dismissed, and the Infanta ceased to call herself Princess of England. The marriage was postponed indefinitely. The Prince matched these actions by giving the golden ewer with which the Queen of Spain had presented him to one of his footmen, and when one day the Infanta sent him a present of sweetmeats he gave them to some of his servants with contempt, scarcely deigning to look at them.

Pursuing the delightful role of popular hero, Buckingham now began to urge upon James the necessity of summoning Parliament, for he was anxious both to vindicate himself before the nation's representatives and to obtain the necessary funds for the conduct of a war against Spain. But the King was spending his time formulating one frenzied scheme after another for the settlement of European affairs, and lent a very reluctant ear to his favourite's cajolery. The present situation was more than trying to him. He had just suffered a sharp attack of gout and his physical pain only served to accentuate his mental torture. Never had his fatal indecision been more patent. Whilst he had moments when he was going to set Europe ablaze, with

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 939.

the aid of Turkish troops, further reflection caused his warlike ardour to die a speedy death, and the peaceful propensities of a lifetime once more stirred within him. Forgetting his erstwhile enthusiasm, his eyes would fill with tears, as he asked the Prince plaintively, 'Would you engage me in a war in my old days and make me quarrel with Spain?'¹

Yet, as may be imagined, Buckingham's importunity won the day, and on December 28th James signed the warrant ordering the Lord Keeper to issue writs for a Parliamentary election. Bristol was commanded to return to England, and it was generally considered that the Spanish negotiations were terminated.

James had given way to Buckingham in the face of his own most treasured convictions, and it was clear that in so doing he had surrendered a large portion of his royal authority to his favourite. During these fateful days of December the real direction of affairs passed over to the Duke, who, from this moment until his death four years later, was the virtual ruler of Great Britain.

With an inadequate appreciation of the difficulties of the European situation, Buckingham now considered a war against Spain and the Empire an airy trifle, to be entered upon lightly, despite the fact that England was totally unprepared, her army negligible, her navy quite deficient, and her resources utterly unfit to meet the heavy strain of such a struggle. He awaited eagerly the Parliament which was to give him its sanction and support, and was furious, therefore, when he learnt that James had again begun to treat with the Spanish Ambassadors who, on January 13th, had made him an offer to open negotiations whereby an agreement on the Palatinate question might be reached between the two countries.

¹ GARDINER, v, p. 157.

In spite of Buckingham's opposition James now brought forward this new development for the consideration of the Commissioners for Spanish Affairs, who were asked to vote upon two questions. Firstly, had the King of Spain ever seriously intended that the marriage should take place? Secondly, was a declaration of war justifiable on the grounds of his conduct with regard to the Palatinate question? There were only two who voted to the Duke's satisfaction — Conway, who was his creature, and Carlisle, who had no reason to love the Spaniard. The Prince, who had been present at the proceedings, preserved his usual taciturnity at the unfavourable vote, but Buckingham flew into one of his famous rages and, pacing up and down the room frantically, rated the Councillors in no measured terms. He left the room in a violent temper, accompanied by the Prince, and the two decided to go post haste to Newmarket that they might acquaint James with what had just happened. Sir Arthur Chichester, who chanced to pass them as they left Whitehall, was both puzzled and alarmed at the words Buckingham bitterly flung at him, 'What, are you turned, too?', for he knew nothing of the recent trouble and trembled at the thought of having given offence all unwittingly to the powerful favourite. Such petulance, whilst it might increase men's fear of Buckingham, did not show his character in a pleasant light and only lowered him in their good opinion. His rage was perhaps appeased after the interview with the King, who had no wish that the whole story of the Spanish negotiations should be laid before his Commissioners. After further debate it was decided to refer the whole question to Parliament, the elections for which were now almost complete.

On Thursday, February 19th, 1624, King James rode to meet his fourth and last Parliament with greater show and pomp than had been previously seen on such occasions.

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An eyewitness, who had gone specially to see the Prince, notices that 'he is grown a fine gentleman, and beyond all expectation I had of him when I saw him last, which was not these seven years; and, indeed, I think he never looked nor became himself better in all his life'.¹ This marked improvement in Charles strengthened the popularity of Buckingham, for it was observed on all sides that his association with the Duke had not been to the disadvantage of the Prince.

The King made a very gracious and plausible speech to Parliament, marked, however, by greater humility and less dogmatism than was his wont. After outlining the various negotiations in which he had been engaged to settle the peace of Christendom, he spoke of the long delays interposed by the Spaniards against the marriage project, so that he had allowed his son to go to Spain, and had thereby discovered how fallacious were the treaties. The full story of the Spanish proceedings was to be related to them by the Secretary, with the assistance of the Prince and Buckingham, and upon their good advice the felicity of the nation now depended. The veto set upon their freedom of speech in the last Parliament was thus removed. On the graver question of the treatment of the Roman Catholics, James declared that he never intended this to be anything more than a temporary alleviation of the penal laws. After a few more well chosen and flattering phrases, James delegated his authority to the one who waited upon the very steps of the throne.

This was Buckingham's supreme moment. The inferior role assigned to him in the King's speech was by no means palatable, and long before the day which had been fixed for the narration to the Houses it was learnt that the Duke himself would relate the account of the Spanish negotia-

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, p. 168.

tions to Parliament, whilst the Prince and Secretary stood by to corroborate his evidence. The Houses were to meet, not in the Painted Chamber, but in the Great Hall at Westminster where they were wont to assemble before the King. A more patent assumption of regal dignity could not be imagined!

On the appointed day Buckingham awaited the Houses in the Great Hall, and to those who were gathered there in all eagerness to hear his story, that tall handsome figure, invested in their eyes with all the outward signs of sovereignty, must have made a picture to live in the imagination for many a long day. The Duke had a lengthy tale to tell, and one which investigation has shown was little more than a half truth. He had come back from Spain profoundly impressed with her inherent weakness, and more than convinced of the duplicity of her rulers. It was, therefore, in a rancorous mood towards all things Spanish that he proceeded to make his historic relation.

The narrative contained nothing which was not strictly true — its faults lay rather in its very grave omissions. Buckingham produced evidence against the Spaniards which, to an excited Parliament, was more than conclusive. In the first place he revealed the damning story of Olivares' indiscreet words to Porter during the embassy of 1622, 'That for the match he knew nothing of it', and then proceeded to acquaint the Houses with the suggestion which he personally had received from the Spanish favourite to the effect that, once the Prince were converted, the marriage could proceed without Papal assistance. Worse was yet to come. The Spaniards had declared that even were the Emperor to beat and buffet them they could never fight against him. So much for England's hopes of restoring the Palatinate to Frederick by Spanish aid. More incriminating still was the fact that Olivares had disclosed to

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Charles and Buckingham the information that for these many years the Spanish negotiations had been little more than an elaborate comedy, played with the idea of deceiving the English King, in proof of which he could show them correspondence from Philip himself declaring that neither he nor his father, the late King, had any serious intention of allowing the marriage to take place.

Whether Buckingham realized that he was drawing a veil over all that might be considered detrimental to his own cause it is difficult to decide. Even allowing for the fact that he usually let his vivid imagination run away with him, it must appear incredible to a dispassionate critic that he could see no folly in the madcap dash across Europe, no duplicity in Charles's rash promises and continual evasions of the religious issue when in Spain, or no unseemliness in his own provocative behaviour towards the Spanish ministers. He had blamed Charles severely enough for his temporization during the visit — why, then, should it now appear less blameworthy?

It is most probable that Buckingham, with a shrewdness unusual in him, had accurately gauged the temper of the Commons and was playing finely upon their emotions. He had carried their feelings up to fever pitch by one dramatic revelation after another, and now at the psychological moment crowned his oratory with language which he knew could not fail to make its appeal. 'Shall we endure further Spanish diplomacy, or, setting treaties aside, let His Majesty trust his own strength and stand upon his own feet?'¹ he cried to the excited Houses, and the historic Hall echoed to the cheers of approbation which must have sounded sweet in the ears of him who had found himself so unexpectedly the most popular man in Britain.

This popularity was indubitably assured by the events

¹ The relation is printed in *Lords' Journals*, III, pp. 220-32.

which followed his declaration. Beside themselves with indignation, the two Spanish Ambassadors, Inijosa and Coloma, hastened to James on February 26th, and laid a formal complaint against Buckingham, asserting that had any of their ministers spoken against the English King as he had spoken against the King of Spain, he would have paid the penalty with his head. Completely at a loss for an answer, James proceeded to ask the two Houses — who, having heard the relation, were in a position to judge it — for their opinion.

The reply of the Lords in the Duke's favour could not have been more definite or unanimous, and so great was the anti-Spanish fervour in the Upper House that even the Bishop of Durham declared himself ready to lay aside his rochet and gird on a sword if the King would take the course of war. The Commons went even further in their emotional demonstrations. Carried away by excitement, Phelps uttered extravagant speeches lauding Buckingham at the expense of the Spaniard and expressing the hope that the Duke would 'keep his head on his shoulders to see thousands of Spaniards' heads drop either from their shoulders or into the seas'. More fiery still were the words of the intrepid Coke, who voiced the general opinion when he cried: 'Shall he lose his head? Never any man deserved better of his King and Country!' By a unanimous vote he was declared exempt from any blame as regards the form of his narrative. As a demonstration of their trust in him, a few members suggested that all his lands and honours should be confirmed to him by Act of Parliament, but it was replied that this was no time to commend individuals, though no doubt he deserved well.¹ To both Houses the King now declared — by way of increasing their general satisfaction — that he cordially agreed with

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, pp. 194, 197.

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their verdict, and had, in any case, been quite ready to accept Buckingham's unsupported testimony. He was now able to reveal to them that Buckingham had spent £4000 of his own money whilst he was in Spain, and never expected a penny of it back; that his judgment and diligence were a pattern to all ambassadors, and that his being such a good servant naturally made himself a good master.

The afternoon of this same day the Lords resolved that, subject to the consent of the Commons, the King should be asked to break off finally all negotiations with Spain, both for the marriage and the restitution of the Palatinate. There could be no doubt about the consent of the Commons — their temper was as strongly anti-Spanish as could have been desired! On March 1st Sir Benjamin Rudyerd made a speech in the Lower House upon the recent events. The Spanish match, he declared, was most injurious to the state. Through it the Palatinate and almost the entire Protestant cause abroad had been lost. The Protestants were scattered and disunited in Germany, suppressed in France, threatened in Holland. In his opinion the wisest course for the King to pursue was to declare all treaties with Spain cancelled, to render assistance to the Low Countries, reinforce Ireland, strengthen the forts, and equip the Navy, commencing in real earnest a war for the Palatinate and the defence of Protestantism. It was decided by the Commons that a petition should be presented to the King embodying the main points of Rudyerd's speech.

But to James this speech had seemed very much like covert criticism of himself and his policy, and he did not relish the idea of heading a great religious crusade against the Spanish King. So, to evade the issue, when the petition was ready to be presented to him on March 3rd

he declared that he was suffering from a violent cold, whereby he was prevented from receiving it. Buckingham was furious at his master's temporizing, and forcibly demonstrated the authority he had come to wield over the King in a most insolent letter, commanding James to receive the petition and outlining for him the answers he was to give the Commons! The authenticity of this letter might well be doubted, were not the original in Buckingham's own hand. 'In obedience to your commands,' he wrote boldly, 'I will tell the Houses of Parliament that you, having been upon the fields this afternoon, have taken such a fierce rheum and cough, as, not knowing how you will be this night, you are not yet able to appoint them a day of hearing; but I will forbear to tell them that, notwithstanding your cold, you were able to speak with the King of Spain's instruments, though not with your own subjects.' Strange language, indeed, from a minister to his sovereign — it would almost seem that their positions were reversed! More candid criticism was yet to follow: 'All I can say,' Buckingham writes in conclusion, 'is that you move slowly towards your own happiness and safety, and those that depend of you. I pray God at last you may attain to it, otherwise I shall take little comfort in wife or child, though now I am suspected to look more towards the rising sun than my maker.'¹ Accompanying this strange epistle was a memorandum of the line James was to take with the Commons. He was to express his gratitude for their advice, to promise to consult them on all questions of war and peace, and allow them to choose a committee to deal with any money they might vote for the recovery of the Palatinate.

Not many months ago, James had valiantly told the Venetian Ambassador that rather than allow Buckingham

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 460.

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to gain the upper hand 'he would cut off his head'.¹ That his words were empty enough was now forcibly demonstrated. To this high-handed action on the part of his favourite he only replied by the most complete submission. On March 5th he received the deputation from the Houses at Theobalds. Four of Rudyerd's proposals — shortly to be known as 'the four points' — he accepted unconditionally. These were the strengthening of the fortifications, the fitting out of the fleet, the reinforcement of Ireland, and the assistance of the Low Countries. He would also allow Parliament to superintend the money for the Palatinate, adding humbly that he hoped it would allow him something for his personal needs. But upon one point his remaining shred of spirit made him take a firm stand. He did not like the idea of going to war against Spain. Let the struggle be for the defence of the Protestants abroad, by all means, but let it not be an aggressive war against Philip.

Yet even in this James expected to be overridden. Speaking one day to the Spanish Ambassador he complained bitterly of the change which had come over his son and his favourite. The Prince had been, before his visit to Spain, as docile a son as could be desired, and well affected to the Spanish nation. But now he was completely carried away by rash and youthful counsels and followed the humour of Buckingham 'who had he knew not how many devils in him since that journey'.² He greatly feared that Philip must be warned that Parliament would force him into a war with Spain, unless that monarch could find some way of effecting a complete restitution of the Palatinate.

In the meantime, Charles had proceeded on his own

¹ Valaresso to the Doge, Sept. 29th, 1623, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1623-25), p. 121.

² CABALA, p. 276.

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fifteenths towards a continental alliance, and, in spite of Charles's recent declaration, repeated his request for a personal grant to pay off his own debts. This answer threw the Prince into a surly opposition to his father, and Buckingham into a fit of tempestuous wrath.

Again were the Spanish Ambassadors to be seen going openly about the streets, smiling triumphantly. James's indecision had been taken generally to mean that, for the moment, the Spanish war was off. But Buckingham was not going to give in without a struggle. He now appears in the unusual role of the protector of Parliamentary liberties against the King. Already, before James had delivered his recent reply to the Parliamentary resolution, the Duke had sensed in which directions his thoughts were trending. He had, therefore, written a letter to the King, pleading the cause of Parliament and threatening him with the results of going his own way. Well might James wonder what devil had entered into him! This amazing epistle was couched in the following haughty terms: 'I beseech you send me your plain and resolute answer whether, if your people so resolved to give you a royal assistance, with a promise after, in case of necessity, to assist you with their lives and fortunes; whether you will not accept it, and their counsel to break the match, with the other treaties . . . It is feared, when your turns are served, you will not call them together again to reform abuses, grievances and the making of laws for the good government of the country . . . Sir, I beseech you, think seriously of this, and resolve once constantly to run one way. For so long as you waver between the Spaniards and your subjects, to make advantage of both you are sure to do it with neither.'¹

And so, after James had disregarded this advice, and delivered his indeterminate answer to the Houses, Bucking-

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 466.

ham impetuously sought an interview with him, where he pressed further the points already advanced in the letter and introduced to the astonished King the new idea which had been formulating itself in his brain for some time past. In itself the idea was good and far-seeing. Buckingham perceived that France, not Spain, was the growing power to be reckoned with and he now proposed to strengthen England's position abroad by an alliance with France. But the means he had selected of effecting this alliance were more than astonishing, in view of his recent experiences. He suggested nothing less than a marriage between the Roman Catholic French Princess, Henrietta Maria, and Prince Charles. At first James was stricken with horror at the mere idea, coming at such a moment. It would be no better than the Spanish affair, he argued, for France would follow Spain in demanding impossible concessions for the Roman Catholics over here. But Buckingham had come well preened with arguments wherewith to talk his master round. He pointed out that in this case the stakes would not be so great. There was no Palatinate question, France had no personal hostage in the Prince, whilst any demands for the freedom of the Roman Catholics could be met by counter-claims for the liberty of the French King's Huguenot subjects. James allowed himself to be persuaded and gave his consent that the matter might be broached to Parliament.

Next day, therefore, Charles and Buckingham presented themselves before the Houses to explain away the King's unsatisfactory answer and to assure them that any money they might vote would all be applied to the war against Spain. Then Buckingham proceeded to relate to them his conversation with the King anent the proposed French marriage. It soon became evident from the downcast faces around them that this was indeed unpopular, and it was

no doubt to mollify this discontent and turn their thoughts into other channels that the Prince whispered softly, 'His Majesty has a long sword. If it is once drawn, it will not easily go in again.'¹ The talk of the proposed match was tacitly shelved and the Commons devoted themselves to considerations of the war against Spain. On March 20th they decided to vote the King £300,000 for the conduct of the war, specifying that it was 'for the securing of Ireland, the assistance of your neighbours, the States of the United Provinces, and others of your Majesty's friends and allies, and the setting forth of your Royal Navy'. Beyond the ambiguous phrase 'others of your Majesty's friends and allies' no mention was made of James's scheme for armed action in Germany, and, indeed, the sum voted was hardly large enough for such a design. Yet James, perhaps in the anticipation of more to come during the autumn session, graciously accepted the grant, promising not to touch a penny of it without the consent of their treasurers. But the Commons felt a chill of apprehension when the King proceeded to inform them 'whether I shall send twenty thousand men or ten thousand men, whether by sea or land, east or west, by diversion or otherwise . . . you must leave that to the King'. This, indeed, was the very last thing they were prepared to do.

But to the populace, at any rate, the King's answer was all-sufficient. At last the hated yoke of the Spaniard was thrown off! In their excitement some of the crowd threw stones and lighted firebrands at the windows of the Spanish Embassy in London. After dark, bonfires blazed in every street, and people danced and shouted their joy that the domination of Gondomar would never be repeated.

Meanwhile, the new Spanish Ambassador to England, Lafuente, had been held up in France, near Amiens, by

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, p. 189.

certain masked gentlemen who robbed him of all his secret dispatches. They were no common thieves, for his money and personal possessions were untouched. It was generally suspected that the robbers were Frenchmen, that their deed had been instigated by the Marquess of Hamilton and that the whole affair had the connivance of Buckingham. When Lafuente arrived in London without his dispatches he was curtly informed that the negotiations were at an end, and as he left the room after the interview he met the Dutch Commissioners, with whom James was now treating for the assistance to be given to the Low Countries. To add to the indignation of the Spaniards, Parliament now proceeded to tighten up the administration of the penal laws.

Even the Pope had added his censure upon Spain for bungling the whole affair — 'There is much muttering about the coming of Padre Maestro from Rome', writes a contemporary, 'where the Pope blames the King of Spain for managing no better when the Prince was in Spain.'¹ The Prince so far forgot his native courtesy in his dislike for all things Spanish, that when he received a present of three cartloads of luscious fruits from the Countess of Olivares, he scarcely glanced at them and left them to his servants.

The Spanish match was dead and cold, and when, on April 14th, that renegade and soldier of fortune, Count Mansfeld, arrived in London to talk of magnificent schemes for the subjugation of the Imperial forces, he was eagerly welcomed by the Prince and slept that night in the very room which had been so expensively furnished for the Infanta in St. James's Palace. His visit to England was greeted by a tremendous demonstration on the part of the populace and in their warlike fervour men pressed forward to try and touch his cloak. In his interview with James Mansfeld spoke of the forthcoming war for the recovery of

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (James I), 1623-25, p. 193.

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the Palatinate as a mere bagatelle. All he asked was a force of 10,000 infantry, 3,000 horse, six guns and £20,000 a month. He could get the rest from France, Venice and Savoy, who would willingly come to his assistance once he had made a start.

Whilst James, Charles and Mansfeld were talking, Buckingham had thought fit to take a preliminary measure of action, and what he discovered in the naval equipment of the country administered a sharp check to his optimism. On April 1st, therefore, he summoned a committee of both Houses to meet him in the Painted Chamber and outlined the position to them. The Spanish treaties, he could assure them, were quite definitely broken off. He himself had inspected the fleet and consulted the Navy Commissioners as to how they might furnish the necessary supplies, for the Navy was in dire straits, and time was pressing. He had taken up £5000 worth of supplies upon his own private security and would gladly spend his entire fortune, but this would not suffice. He therefore suggested that they should approach certain wealthy financiers and ask for an immediate loan upon security of the forthcoming Parliamentary grant. The money thus lent would be given over to Parliamentary Commissioners to handle.

These warlike preparations were viewed with alarm by the Spanish Ambassadors and in their wild despair they decided to strike at the one whom they conceived to be the author of all their troubles — the Duke of Buckingham. They fondly imagined that if once they could overthrow the magnificent edifice of Buckingham's favour with the King — which, rumour had it, was already tottering — the Spanish alliance could be restored to its former footing, and war talk forgotten. The chief difficulty was to secure a private audience with James, for Buckingham was always present at all interviews. Moreover, guards were placed at

the Palace with instructions not to admit the Spaniards to the King's presence. None the less, on March 29th, Inijosa and Coloma had adventurously managed to evade these guards and the spies who constantly watched them, and arrived at Whitehall. Here they were met by the King, Prince and Duke, and whilst Coloma held the two latter in earnest conversation, Inijosa managed to slip a paper into the King's hand and with a wink signed to James to put it into his pocket. It contained a request that the King should see Don Francisco de Carondelet in private, and to this he acceded. An audience was fixed for eleven o'clock on the night of April 1st, when Carondelet proceeded to enumerate his charges against the Duke of Buckingham, inevitably involving the Prince, much to the unfortunate King's misery.

His Majesty's position, commenced Carondelet, was one of virtual imprisonment, with the Duke as his gaoler. No more surely had King John of France been a prisoner in England or King Francis in Madrid, than James now was in his own realm. Shut up in his country palaces, he had to view his son and favourite guiding the destinies of Britain. The Duke had made his position doubly secure by insinuating his way into the popular affections and assuming the leadership of Parliament. He had openly bragged of the King's submission to his will and had revealed in the Houses certain very secret proceedings taken upon His Majesty's private oath. It was common gossip in foreign countries, continued the Spaniard, that Great Britain was no longer governed by a monarchy, but by a Triumvirate, of which Buckingham was the chief, the Prince the second and the King the last of all. The eyes of men were turned towards the rising sun. He ended with an exhortation to the King, as the oldest and wisest monarch in Europe, to free himself from this captivity by cutting off 'so dangerous

and ungrateful an affector of greatness and popularity as the Duke'.¹ But although this discourse undoubtedly did much to increase James's unhappy state of mind, he could not bring himself to believe such things of his beloved Steenie, who continued unabated in his ascendancy.

April 18th saw the issue of an order by the Lord Admiral to fit out twelve ships of war, whilst on April 21st a Council of War was appointed. Clearly, decided the Spaniards, the statements made by Carondelet had been too mild, and it was with the abandonment of despair that on April 22nd Lafuente presented himself before the King at Theobalds, demanding a private audience, and in his excitement grossly overstating his case against the Duke. He even accused him of aiming at the throne of England for his descendants by preventing any marriage on the part of Charles, and by effecting an alliance between the eldest son of the Electress Palatine and his daughter Mary. He then proceeded to accuse the Duke of the most infamous behaviour in Spain, painting his actual misconduct in the most glaring colours and adding many original embellishments.

On May 3rd Padre Maestro presented a similar declaration to the King, commenting that the present situation in England would only be fitting if the King were young and inexperienced, and the favourite wise and dispassionate — instead of which the position was reversed! The Spanish intrigue reached its climax when Inijosa, in a final desperate effort, exploded the bomb that he had unearthed a secret plot, hatched by Buckingham, to transfer the crown to the Prince, and to entertain James at his country house at Theobalds, with hunting and the like pleasant pastimes, until the present matters were ripe. To give countenance to his story, Inijosa boldly asserted that several members of the Privy Council could support these facts.

¹ CABALA, p. 275.

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The King was stricken to the heart at the tale of such perfidy in the two beings he loved most in all the world. Setting out immediately for Windsor, he called at St. James's Palace on the way, where Charles and Buckingham came forward to meet him. The tears welled up in the old King's eyes as he pathetically asked his favourite: 'Ah, Steenie, Steenie, wilt thou kill me?'¹ and repeated in broken phrases most of Inijosa's story. At first Buckingham was stricken dumb with astonishment, but presently he recovered and proceeded to calm the agitated monarch as best he could. He begged him to consider the great filial affection of the Prince, and the loyalty of his people, which alone would make such a scheme impossible, apart from his own great devotion to his master. James, somewhat pacified, departed for Windsor accompanied by his son, but Buckingham, deeply upset, chose to remain behind. It was not in his nature to lie down under such accusations, and after he had recovered from his first shock, he declared that the charges against him must be substantiated. He forbore the King's company for the moment, declaring that with such a charge hanging over his head, the Tower was a more suitable place of residence for him than the Palace at Windsor! Inijosa, thus brought to the point, preferred his accusations in writing, admitting that they were not such as could be legally proved and declaring that men were too afraid of Buckingham to tell the truth against him. The Spaniard had sealed his own doom, for when, on May 2nd, the Privy Councillors were questioned they declared, one and all, that no treachery had ever passed Buckingham's lips in their hearing.

The Duke was cleared of suspicion, and, indeed, there is little in his open and impetuous nature to suggest his complicity in such an underhand scheme. Furthermore, since

¹ WILSON, *Life and Reign of James I*, p. 783.

he already wielded complete authority and could bend the King readily to his will, there was no point in it. At all events, the whole affair ended in a complete reconciliation between the King and his favourite, whilst Inijosa was forced to retract all he had said. In another month he and Coloma left England, being denied a farewell audience of the King, with no presents nor convoy, attended to Dover only by Sir Lewis Lewkenor, not in his official capacity, but as a private gentleman to protect them from any insults they might receive on the way.

Buckingham had never been nearer to disaster and in his endeavour to sift the affair to the very bottom he commenced an inquiry into the conduct of the Lord Treasurer, Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, who was suspected of having had a hand in the recent accusations. Cranfield, city bred, rising through success in business, had insinuated himself into Buckingham's favour and married one of his female relatives. In a short time he was made Privy Councillor, Master of the Wardrobe, Master of the Wards, Lord High Treasurer and Earl of Middlesex. He now began to criticize Buckingham, demonstrating an independence of opinion and a desire to stand without his patron. Buckingham had long been annoyed at his attitude and now, suspecting him of a hand in the recent plot, resolved to punish him. Since Parliament was at the moment his instrument, he decided, ironically enough, to revive the ancient weapon of Impeachment.¹ The Commons showed alacrity in their desire to obey his behests, whilst Middlesex had many enemies amongst the Peers, who had long resented the continued power of one of such low origin.

¹ There had been no impeachment since Suffolk's trial in 1450. The procedure was almost forgotten when, in 1621, Parliament launched its attack upon Michell, Mompesson, and Bacon. There is an opinion that these trials were revivals of the old form of impeachment, but actually the Commons took little part in the proceedings and their statements are vague and confused. In the charge against Middlesex the idea of indictment had become much more clear, and the notion that the Commons could claim inquisitorial powers was strengthened.

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James alone perceived the innate folly of this course, and remonstrated with his inexperienced son and headstrong favourite, assuring them that they were dealing a mortal blow to the power of the crown and the right of a King to protect his ministers. But his arguments left the Duke quite unmoved, and finally James was driven by his rage to exclaim: 'By God, Steenie, you are a fool and will shortly repent this folly, and will find that, in this fit of popularity, you are making a rod with which you will be scourged yourself.' Then, turning to the Prince, he said angrily: 'You will live to have your belly full of Parliamentary Impeachments; and when I shall be dead, you will have too much cause to remember how much you have contributed to the weakening of the Crown by the two precedents you are now so fond of.'¹ He referred to the engaging of Parliament in the prosecution of the war, in addition to the matter of the impeachment. Time was to show dramatically how prophetic were the King's words. Yet for the moment his remonstrances were of no avail, the impeachment proceeded, and Middlesex was sentenced to a long and strict imprisonment and dishonoured for the rest of his life.

Buckingham had rid himself of one opponent but a far more powerful enemy was on his way from Spain. In reply to James's letter commanding his return to England, Bristol confidently declared: 'My departure from this court shall be with all speed, to cast myself at your Majesty's feet, where I am in no way diffident to appear an honest and faithful servant.' To Buckingham he had written from Madrid, on December 6th, 1623, professing his readiness to co-operate with him, and his desire to bury all past misunderstandings. 'The present estate of the King's fortunes,' he declared, 'requireth the concurrency of all his servants and the co-operation of all his ministers, which

¹ CLARENDON, *History of the Rebellion*, I, p. 44.

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maketh me desirous to make unto your Grace this tender of my service: that if there have happened any errors or misunderstandings, your Grace will for that regard pass them over: and for anything that may personally concern my particular cause, I shall labour to give you the satisfaction that shall deserve your friendship.' But he was prepared for all emergencies and went on to state loftily: 'I shall not be found unarmed with patience against anything that can happen to me.'¹

The tone of this letter is very different from the nauseating servility with which so many of Buckingham's creatures wrote to him to ask his favour. It showed a readiness to serve, together with a sturdy independence which demonstrated that the Earl was not prepared to give himself over entirely to Buckingham's views. The Duke was cold to Bristol's overtures, and, after a conference with the Prince, decided that he must not be allowed a trial, since his knowledge of the transactions which had taken place in Spain was far too intimate to be made public. After Bristol's return, Charles and Buckingham — thoroughly afraid of him, as it seems — used all their efforts to have him confined to his house without being given a hearing upon the charges against him. This was no way to deal with such a man, and Bristol was hot in his resentment, again and again petitioning for a chance to answer on his own behalf. Finally, on July 10th, a series of interrogations was sent to him, which he was able to answer fully, showing that he had always followed his master's orders. At this point, James was ready to grant Bristol a hearing, but his son and his favourite used their combined influence to frustrate such a meeting. For the rest of the reign the unfortunate earl remained in obscurity in his house at Sherborne. Buckingham most probably believed that he was doing his country

¹ CABALA, p. 96.

a good turn in thus disposing of one who might have inclined the King's ear once again to the hated Spaniard, but he had made for himself a powerful enemy. Bristol was to show later, at a time of crisis, that he could not so easily be silenced.

The first week of May saw Buckingham in the throes of a dangerous illness, no doubt occasioned by the shock he must have suffered as a result of Inijosa's malicious accusations. Rumours were not wanting that the illness proceeded from more definite Spanish malpractice, and it was affirmed that some poison had been given him in Spain which was now beginning to do its work. For a fortnight Buckingham lay at his home with a high fever and a sharp attack of jaundice, and during his illness all important state business was held up. By May 21st the favourite had twice been seen taking the air, and on the 24th it was reported that he was to accompany the King to Nonesuch, there to recuperate fully. The immediate effect of his breakdown had been to strengthen the bond between the King and himself, for James had been a constant visitor at his bedside. So the last few months of the old King's life were passed free from the miserable clouds of estrangement which had seemed at the beginning of the year to be likely to blot out permanently the great friendship between him and Steenie. By the end of June, Buckingham was again able to take his place at Court, though considerably weakened physically by his recent attack, and those who had hoped for his rapid decline were once again thwarted.

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THE remarkable vicissitudes of a mind like Buckingham's become bewildering to follow unless we grasp the initial fact that in all his policy, both at home and abroad, this versatile young minister was for ever pursuing the shadows which haunted his fertile imagination, thereby losing hold of the substance of reality. At this period of his career we find him at the pinnacle of success, the darling of the multitude, the bosom friend of both King and Prince, the popular leader of Parliament, so that it seems difficult to believe that by 1625 the first Parliament of Charles could be denouncing him whole-heartedly, seeing in his continued rule an ever increasing menace to the realm. A wise statesman would have made his popularity the means of steering the nation into channels of prosperity, a crafty politician might perhaps have turned it to his own ends, abandoning immediately any measure whereby it was endangered. Why then, did Buckingham deliberately throw away such a priceless possession? The reason is partly to be sought in the plan upon which his heart was now set, to the exclusion of all else — the marriage of Charles with Henrietta Maria of France. Although there had been no open opposition to the marriage in the last session of Parliament, the general murmurings were clearly against the idea. An alliance with France had no place in the Commons' scheme of things. Yet, wisely conducted, a treaty between the two powers might have resulted to the benefit of Great Britain on the Continent, for Richelieu — so soon to be guiding the destinies of France — though a Cardinal of the Church of Rome, was never averse to lending a little secret aid to a

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Protestant power if he thought thereby to strengthen his own position. And it would, no doubt, be greatly to France's advantage to assist Great Britain — very secretly of necessity — in crushing the power of Spain.

Unfortunately, Buckingham's was not the personality to conduct such a tricky piece of diplomacy, and he did not seem even to realize that the inherent religious differences between the two countries demanded, at the best, a very covert alliance. Thinking that the French King would see no harm in the imposition of countless bars upon the free exercise of his sister's religion once she were Queen of England, he proceeded to negotiate the alliance once again through the medium of an unpopular marriage. He showed a complete lack of statesmanship in even contemplating such a step in face of the growing strength of Puritanism in the English middle classes.

Perhaps the greatest charge which can be laid against Buckingham is that, always goaded on by his vanity to achieve some stupendous coup which would acclaim his immortal fame, he rushed headlong into daring schemes fraught with difficulties which, if he perceived, he chose to disregard. For the remaining years of his life he now held the destinies of England in his two hands, and again and again we see him carrying the nation on the tide of his enthusiasm into some dangerous water, where shipwreck can be only the possible result. For much of this folly posterity has condemned him violently, not recognizing that he was, in reality, no vicious, tyrannic monster, seeking to establish his own omnipotence at the expense of his country, but rather a rash, impetuous being, unschooled in diplomacy, and captivated by schemes which possessed, for himself at any rate, brilliant prospects of success, whereby the fast fading fortunes of Great Britain on the Continent might be re-established.

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After the prorogation of Parliament there was little to stand in the way of this new scheme of Buckingham's and he proceeded to pursue it with characteristic vigour, in spite of the fact that he had only very lukewarm support from James and Charles, who had not yet forgotten the outcome of the recent Spanish negotiations. In France the alliance was viewed as extremely desirable and had secured a powerful advocate in the Queen Mother. The French Government was faced with three paramount dangers — the growing strength of its Huguenot subjects and the rising spectre of the Imperial power, together with the no less formidable expansion of Spanish territory in Europe. It seemed that before them lay a choice of evils. Either a peace must be concluded with the Huguenots and attention turned towards the war with Spain and the Empire, or hostilities with the foreigner terminated for the commencement of a religious campaign at home. Eventually Louis allowed his patriotism to overcome his religious convictions — a policy which his minister Richelieu was soon to pursue with such striking success. An alliance with England must be effected, that together these two powers might crush the Spaniard and check the Imperial revival.

There was another side issue, apparently overlooked by Buckingham, yet fraught with endless possibilities of creating trouble. The Duke had told James in their recent discussion on the marriage that this time there would be no Palatinate question, but had omitted to mention the problem of the Valtelline. This was a narrow pass, stretching from Lake Como to the Tyrolese mountains, and formed the only way of communication between Italy and Germany for Spain without encroaching on neutral states. It was now occupied by Spanish forces on a very questionable title. Whilst Englishmen clamoured in Parliament for the restitution of the Palatinate, Frenchmen were no less in-

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sistent in their demands for the restoration of the Valtelline, which they considered their rightful possession. Here lay one of the dangers of an alliance with France, for it was certain that the English Parliament would never agree to the employment of British troops for such an object as the recovery of the Valtelline. Buckingham must also have been well aware, from his recent experiences, that there would be no securing any relaxation in the administration of the recusancy laws. Yet he continued to negotiate with France and to force an unwilling James and Charles in the same direction, sanguine to the end that they would secure all their wishes without any *quid pro quo*. The French were equally sanguine in their hopes to evade all obligations, and so the negotiations for the treaty were commenced, each trying to hoodwink the other. Nothing but disaster was to be expected from dealing in such half shades of diplomacy.

Meanwhile Lord Kensington, who had 'an amorous tongue and a wise head' and could 'court it smoothly as any man with the ladies',¹ had arrived in Paris, charged by Buckingham to take a preliminary sounding of the general situation and by Charles to convey affectionate greetings to the Princess. It was soon apparent to Kensington that before the French were willing to negotiate, the Spanish treaties must be definitely broken off. This opinion was conveyed to Buckingham in a letter which was more remarkable for its wealth of romantic detail. His report of the Princess was couched in glowing terms. 'My Lord,' he wrote, 'she is a lovely, sweet young creature. Her growth is not great yet, but her shape is perfect.'² Informers were not wanting, on the scent of romance, who could tell him that she had seldom displayed such a cheerful countenance as she did now, and that he might guess the cause of it. The

¹ HACKET, *Scrinia Reserata*, Part I, p. 209. ² CABALA, p. 290.

Queen had also expressed her affection for the Prince, declaring that she was sorry that on his informal visit to their masque in 1623 he had viewed her and her sister from such a disadvantageous point in a dark room, since the Princess 'had more loveliness to be considered nearby'. When Kensington produced the Prince's portrait there was a general skirmish on the part of the ladies to see it, in which the Princess, for maidenly modesty, did not join. But Kensington was able to write to Charles and tell him that she had sought a secret interview with him later, when she had desired to borrow the miniature of the Prince, which he wore in a locket about his neck, so that she might gaze upon it in the privacy of her boudoir.¹

Kensington stressed the romantic side of the proposed union at the expense of more serious considerations. The situation was in reality as delicate and dangerous as the most experienced in political intrigue could have desired, for France clearly was not ready to engage in war on a grand scale to help England in the Palatinate question. On the other hand, she intended to bide her time, promising much, fulfilling nothing, whilst English men and money were flung as pawns upon the plains of Germany to create a diversion for the French attack on the Valtelline. An alliance of any description between nations of such divergent interests was bound to lead to trouble. A matrimonial union seemed a fair way of heading to disaster.

But, blind to the difficulties of the situation, Buckingham urged the alliance, and on May 17th the Earl of Carlisle was dispatched to Paris to conclude the negotiations. On a lesser scale, the story of the disputes in Spain was now to be repeated, for immediately there arose the question of toleration for the Roman Catholics. Carlisle's instructions had stated clearly that there could be no question of a

¹ CABALA, p. 287.



HENRIETTA MARIA

From the portrait by Gerard Honthurst in the National
Portrait Gallery

By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

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general relaxation of the penal laws — at the most, England could only offer toleration for the Queen and her household. But this did not satisfy Louis, who proceeded to demand nothing short of a written guarantee from James that he would exercise a universal clemency to the Roman Catholics in England. Verbal agreements would not be accepted.

Charles himself seems to have realized that in view of the recent promises to Parliament such an undertaking could only lead to fierce domestic strife and alienate the nation beyond all measure. And in his opinion it was better to go to war without the aid of France than without the aid of Parliament. At court this attitude must have been obvious to all, for men began to speak of an alliance with one of the Princesses of Mecklenburg or Saxony, whilst all prospects of a French marriage ceased to be discussed. In view of this development La Vieuville, the French minister, recalled Tillières, his half-hearted ambassador in England, and dispatched the Marquis D'Effiat — whose diplomatic ability was remarkable — to try his powers upon the English King.

On July 17th, 1624, James began one of his usual progresses and D'Effiat took care to accompany the court on every possible occasion. Feasts and banquets were given in his honour by the King and various of the court officials, including one at Newhall by Buckingham, which saw the beginning of a close alliance between the new French Ambassador and the favourite.

There can be no doubt that from this moment Buckingham alone must shoulder the responsibility for urging on the French marriage. He seems to have become obsessed by the notion that French assistance was quite indispensable to the furtherance of his plans and that whatever Effiat demanded — however unpalatable or even impossible — must be accepted. So closely did he work with the French

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Ambassador that the court could not but comment upon his actions. His recent popularity rapidly ebbed away as men watched him supporting the foreigner in all his extravagant demands.

Together Effiat and Buckingham began to work upon James and Charles. Apparently Vieuville, upon his own authority, had suggested to Effiat that could he not secure an official agreement from James regarding the penal laws a letter would be just as acceptable and equally binding. Of course the English King must be assured that he only required this letter to show to the Pope with a view to hastening the granting of the dispensation. Unfortunately for Vieuville, his suggestion was regarded by Louis as a piece of unwarranted presumption, and he was dismissed from office.

Richelieu succeeded Vieuville in power, and he realized the futility of trying to hoodwink the Pope. So he proceeded to demand that the concessions must be drawn up in the form of an article under the King's hand and seal. This decision was conveyed to James and Charles whilst Buckingham was enjoying a visit to Wellingborough, whose medicinal waters he was hoping would improve his health, for since his recent illness he had had one or two minor relapses. In the absence of the favourite the King and Prince proceeded to act upon their own initiative and on August 13th a letter was sent to Carlisle and Kensington clearly stating that, in view of the recent demands, the negotiations must be broken off.

Effiat's consternation was complete. He hastened to Wellingborough to inform Buckingham of the recent developments and together they set out to meet the court which was now at Derby. The story goes that on their way they met Cook, the King's messenger, bearing his momentous dispatches to France. Buckingham, caring little for

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the sanctity of the royal seal, opened the packet and read the letters, hurried back to James and demanded a drastic revision. Such an action leaves little doubt as to who was the real ruler of the country. Poor James was forced to alter most of the letter, but on the point of the article his remaining shred of spirit made him take a firm stand. He did go so far as to allow Buckingham to inform Richelieu that he would re-word his original letter and guarantee more definitely the privileges of the Roman Catholics in England. But such evasions of the issue cut no ice with Richelieu, who would accept nothing less than a full and formal agreement.

At this point James and Charles would have recalled the ambassadors and broken off the negotiations, but Buckingham, by now frantic in his desire to secure the French alliance, used his powerful influence to break down their opposition, whilst Effiat was constantly at his side suggesting one idea after another. The outcome of all this diplomacy was that James consented to agree to the French demands, though he still insisted that the agreement must be in the form of a letter. As a formality, the consent of the Council was to be obtained, so that Buckingham might be protected from the certain fury of Parliament in the next session.

It was now the middle of September and at the prorogation James had given his word to summon Parliament on November 2nd. Yet how was he to face the nation's representatives with the recusancy laws already relaxed on the authority of his Privy Council? The meeting was accordingly delayed until February 26th, on the pretext that the increase of the plague in London had made it an unsuitable occasion for an assembly, but a more truthful reason was given by Buckingham himself in a letter to Nithsdale, written in October, expressing the hope that 'the respect

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of the Princess of France, and the reverence which will be given to her person when she shall be here for those graces and virtues that shine in her, as likewise for the love and duty borne to the Prince, being all joined in her, will not only stay the exorbitant or ungentle motions that might otherwise be made in the House of Parliament, but will facilitate in His Majesty's proceedings those passages of favour, grace and goodness which His Majesty hath promised for the ease of the Roman Catholics'.¹ It was indeed a forlorn hope that such hard-headed Puritan squires as Phelips, Pym or Eliot would allow themselves to be won over by a bright-eyed girl of sixteen, no matter how great her personal charm.

On November 10th the marriage treaty was signed by the ambassadors, and now only James's ratification and the Papal dispensation were needed for its completion. On her part, France had cheerfully evaded the issue. Beyond a promise to pay Mansfeld for six months, James had to be content with the fair words of the French King. Carlisle wrote from the French Court: 'that they could not condescend to anything in writing: but if the King's faith and promise would serve the turn, that should be renewed to us here and to His Majesty in England in as full a manner as could be desired'.² It was a most unsatisfactory conclusion to the negotiations, and time was to show how little reliance could be placed upon the words of the French King.

The marriage treaty secured, Buckingham was now to try his skill as the director of a great continental war. His attack was to be by both land and sea. On the Continent English forces, under Mansfeld, were to march to the relief of the Palatinate. On the high seas, England and France

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 179.

² HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, I, p. 539.

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were to unite in an attack upon a Spanish seaport, and the seizure of the Spanish treasure fleet on its way from South America. Such was the grand design of the English War Minister, but how he thought he was going to carry it out without a Parliament to grant the necessary supplies it is difficult to conceive. To the doubtful prospect of French assistance he had sacrificed the invaluable co-operation of the English Parliament. The result of his folly became miserably evident in the events which took place early in 1625.

In November Buckingham had, by some unknown means of coercion, obtained from the Council of War £15,000 for the levying of troops for Mansfeld and £40,000 to pay their expenses for two months. The soldiers were hastily raised by the press-gang, who chose the material nearest at hand, regardless of its suitability. The men had no heart in the struggle and were hardly likely to bring honour and glory upon the name of Britain. 'It is lamentable', writes a contemporary, 'to see the heavy countenances of our pressed men, and to hear the sad farewells they take of their friends, showing nothing but deadly unwillingness to the service; and they move pity almost in all men in regard of the incommmodity of the season, the uncertainty of the employment, and the ill terms upon which they are like to serve.' Under such a renegade as Mansfeld there was little but misery likely to come to the poor soldiers and it was with sad hearts and doubting countenances that their friends watched them marching away to Dover.

At that seaport there were scenes of mutinous disorder. As many as could managed to find freedom in desertion, whilst those who were left threatened to set fire to the town and hang the Mayor. The officers, more than half sorry for the miserable wretches, meted out punishment in a

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desultory fashion, unwilling to add further to their sufferings.

Whilst the soldiers waited at Dover, it was being demonstrated that the French alliance, for which Buckingham had traded his popularity, was utterly empty. The only assistance which Louis deigned to offer was two thousand horse, whilst the port of Calais was to be closed to Mansfeld. He must march on the Palatinate through Holland — France refused to be involved. To this miserable pass had sunk the grand plan of a concerted action by the two nations for the recovery of the Palatinate. By January 31st the already depleted English army left Dover, found the port of Calais closed, the French cavalry not ready, and were forced to proceed to the Dutch port of Flushing. So this half-starved gang of raw recruits, under a notorious adventurer, was launched by Buckingham, in the name of Great Britain, against the veteran armies of Tilly. Seldom had our national prestige sunk to a lower ebb. Other nations were moved to pity by the sufferings of this miserable army, which was defeated almost before it set out. The soldiers had to face the most rigorous part of the winter, and, exhausted by lack of food, they quickly fell victims to the icy blasts and driving snow they encountered. Supplies sent in pity by the Dutch Government saved them for a while, but their plight was soon even worse, for only an efficient administration at home could have provided adequate food and clothing for this multitude. The small supplies granted by the War Council in November were exhausted, whilst Buckingham was otherwise employed in finding money to fit out the ships for his naval expedition. Mansfeld cared little about his troops, who were now 'poor and naked' and dying at the rate of fifty a day. 'All day long we go about for victuals and bury our dead,'¹ writes

¹ GARDINER, v, p. 289.

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Lord Cromwell, one of the commanders. The brother of the Prince of Orange, moved by their sufferings, sent the unfortunate soldiers victuals and straw to cover their frozen bodies. This was the disgraceful news sent to England by Carleton, the English Ambassador in Holland. It was not warfare, for the army was simply dwindling away, already conquered by privation and the rigour of the elements. It was certain by now that Mansfeld would never reach Tilly's forces, and that this meagre company could ever stand up against the well fed, well clad Imperial forces was an idea too incongruous to consider.

December saw Buckingham, apparently unshaken by the miserable fate of this enterprise, preparing to assist France in an attack she was planning upon Genoa, as a diversion to secure the Valtelline. The French King was to hire twenty ships from Holland and twenty from England, and the combined fleet was to go out under his name. This was a small affair compared with the magnificent idea which daily grew stronger in Buckingham's imagination; that of seizing a fort on the Spanish coast — Cadiz for preference — and then taking the treasure fleet already on its way from the rich mines of South America. With Spain crippled, their own coffers well replenished, they could soon conquer the Catholic forces on the Continent, and between them France and England could partition Europe to their own ends. It was a grand idea, but Buckingham was soon to find that his path was fraught with difficulties, and that disaster after disaster was to occur which not even he would be able to explain away to the irate nation he was so gaily misleading.

Nothing perturbed as yet, the Duke was now preparing his equipage for his forthcoming journey to France. On December 4th general rejoicings had been ordered to take place in the form of bells, bonfires, and the discharge of

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guns for the conclusion of the French match. The bride was expected to arrive at the end of January, and the Duke of Buckingham was appointed to go to France as the Prince's proxy. No role could have suited him better, and the equipment and retinue which he was preparing for the journey could not have been more regal, had he been the Prince himself. For the adornment of his handsome person he had 'twenty-seven rich suits, embroidered and laced with silk and silver plushes, besides one rich white satin uncut velvet suit, set all over both suit and cloak with diamonds, the value whereof is thought to be fourscore thousand pounds'. In this suit, with a feather studded with diamonds adorning his hat, a diamonded hat band, sword, girdle and spurs, the Duke planned to make his entry into Paris, dazzling the French Court by the splendour of his first appearance. For the wedding day itself he had prepared to wear a rich suit of purple satin — the colour of kings — embroidered with orient pearl, with a Spanish cloak and all other accoutrements in accordance. This outfit was valued at £2000. 'His other suits are all as rich as invention can frame, or art can fashion,'¹ writes a contemporary. He was to be accompanied by fifteen noblemen and twenty knights, each to have his own retinue, the whole train numbering about six or seven hundred persons. There were to be three coaches, richly upholstered in crimson velvet inside, and covered on the exterior by gold lace. Each coach was to be drawn by eight horses, and to have six coachmen richly attired. To complete the retinue were one hundred and sixty musicians, all dressed in magnificent costumes. So might Cleopatra have prepared to go and meet her Antony!

It seems a pity that, after all, France was denied the sight of this lavish splendour, but Fate intervened in

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 189.

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Buckingham's plans, and when he did actually go to France it was not as the Prince's proxy, and instead of the train of six hundred he took only Montgomery, Morton and Goring with him. In fact he left England so hastily that he had to send back for some of his magnificent suits — including the white velvet one — so that he might appear in them at the court functions.

For on March 5th, 1625, King James was stricken by what proved to be his fatal illness — a tertian ague. At first his ailment was not regarded with any great alarm, for his health had been poor for some months, and many of the usual Christmas to Twelfth Night festivities had been cancelled owing to the King's increasing infirmity. With the coming of spring, large quantities of luscious fruits reached James from the Continent, and, despite the advice of his friends and doctors, the King could not be restrained from eating them with avidity. It is said that on the arrival of a new basket he was unable to wait for the contents to be placed on a dish, but would plunge his hands into the hamper and greedily eat his fill. When he fell ill it was only what had been generally apprehended. On March 12th a contemporary writes 'The King was overtaken on Sunday with a tertian ague, which continues yet, but without any manner of danger, if he would allow himself to be governed by physical rules.'¹

Yet James himself seems to have feared the worst, and although on the 12th he was considered sufficiently convalescent to move to Hampton Court, he suddenly bethought himself that Buckingham, when he had been ill the previous year, had greatly benefited by the remedies of a certain Dr. John Remington, an honest country doctor of Dunmow in Essex, who had cured many patients by his particular line of treatment. This consisted of the applica-

¹ NICHOLS, *Progresses of James I*, III, p. 1028.

tion of 'plaisters' to the stomach and wrists, together with the administration of a posset drink. No sooner did the Countess of Buckingham hear of the King's desire to try the remedy than she sent down to Dunmow for the drink and plaisters, herself applying the latter to the King's stomach and wrists, whilst the posset drink was given to him by Buckingham. Soon after this, the King had another sharp fit of the ague, this time very much more severe, and the royal physicians were called in. Furious at the interference of the Duke and his mother, they refused to do anything until the plaisters had been taken off. This being done, the fifth, sixth and seventh fits were easier. By March 21st he was apparently much improved, and arrangements were still proceeding for Buckingham's journey to France as Charles's proxy. On that date, however, the headstrong monarch desired the Countess's remedies to be applied again, and this time Buckingham protested, informing him that many people were saying that he was trying to poison the King. 'They are worse than devils that say so,'¹ replied James. He had his own way, the plaisters were again applied, and the next fit was an exceptionally violent one. Two days later it was declared that Buckingham would not leave his master until he were perfectly recovered. But on the 24th there seemed little hope, for James was sinking fast. Sending for his son and his principal attendants, the King made a confession of his faith, afterwards receiving the spiritual ministrations of Archbishop Williams. After this his strength rapidly ebbed away, and by noon on March 27th, only in his fifty-seventh year, although for some time he had seemed much older, King James I sank into his last sleep.

¹ Buckingham's Defence (1626), *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 662. A certain Dr. Eglisham, one of James's Scottish physicians, published a scurrilous pamphlet at Frankfort in 1626, accusing Buckingham of poisoning the King, as well as the Marquess of Hamilton and a few others. But his accusations are too wild and malicious to deserve any serious attention.

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JAMES had left a world of affairs which, of late, never ceased to bewilder him, and over which he had for some time exercised no control. The problems of the future he left to his ill-fated son, who was immediately proclaimed King Charles I, both at Theobalds and at Whitehall. The new King, unlike his father, appealed to the popular imagination. He possessed a handsome personality, and in his shy reserve and regal dignity men thought they could envisage countless hopes for the future. Little was known generally of Charles's character, for he made few friends and did not inherit his father's garrulity, preferring silence to speech on most occasions. One thing at least counted strongly in his favour, for all men knew that he was on the popular side in desiring a war with Spain, and the nation was ready to follow its warrior king against the hereditary foe. As Charles was proclaimed at Whitehall, therefore, there were loud cheers on all sides. 'The joy of the people devoured their mourning' says a contemporary.¹

It was soon obvious that the Duke of Buckingham was to enjoy the unwonted distinction of reigning supreme in the affections of two of Britain's monarchs. After James had died, Charles and Buckingham remained at Theobalds for a few hours, coming up to St. James's that night to take up their residence. For the rest of the week Charles remained in the seclusion of his Palace, finding his greatest

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series II, vol. III, p. 243.

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consolation in the presence of the Duke, who was, we are told, his constant companion both day and night. 'He lay on the first night of the reign in the King's bedchamber, and three nights after in the next lodgings.'¹ Far from suffering any diminution, Buckingham's power was to be stronger than ever, for Charles's faith in his friend was even greater than that of James. He regarded him as a wise and diligent minister keenly devoted to his country's interests, and from now onwards showed a determined resolution to adhere to his advice and protect him from all factious opposition. 'The Duke stands hugely high in the substantial part of the King's favour', writes a contemporary.² But it was well known that Charles had a will of his own, and speculations were rife as to whether the personal domination of Buckingham, begun in the last reign, was to continue. Events were soon to show that the Duke would still guide the destinies of the nation in the path of his own desire.

By now Buckingham had obtained a quick conception of the business of government, and had an easy grace of speech and manner which helped him to secure his own way the more readily. His own letters reveal quite clearly that he took his task of government seriously enough. Directed into the proper channels, his energy and enthusiasm might have been invaluable to the nation. Perhaps, under the wise and firm guidance of Elizabeth, Buckingham would have achieved something of value. Under another Henry V he might have won everlasting glory by his daring and brilliance on the battlefields of France, for he never lacked personal courage. But under James and Charles his vanity was flattered by such extreme adulation that his personal glory and personal desires came to

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 3.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 10.

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occupy an altogether disproportionate place in his scheme of things. This weakness led him into lines of conduct so disastrous in their results that posterity has been inclined to see too much the blacker side of his character, and condemn him without a hearing. Yet many of his contemporaries testify that he was a man of no mean ability, and even his enemies cannot deny his tremendous personal charm. In all the arts of a courtier he was exceptionally well endowed, and his nature showed not the slightest trace of meanness or petty avarice. Clarendon, who had no reason to flatter Buckingham, has left us a very just estimate of his character, observing: 'This great man was a person of a noble nature and generous disposition, and of such other endowments as made him very capable of being a great favourite to a great King. He understood the arts of a court, and all the learning that is professed there, exactly well . . . He was of a most flowing courtesy and affability to all men who made any address to him; and so desirous to oblige him that he did not enough consider the value of the obligation or the merit of the person he chose to oblige, from which most of his misfortune resulted. He was of a courage not to be daunted, which was manifested in all his actions, and in his contests with particular persons of the greatest reputation . . . His kindness and affection to his friends was so vehement that they were as so many marriages for better and worse, and so many leagues offensive and defensive: as if he thought himself obliged to make love to all his friends, and make war upon all they were angry with, let the cause be what it would. He was an enemy in the same excess, and prosecuted those he looked upon as his enemies with the utmost rigour and animosity. And when he was in the highest passion, so far from stooping to any dissimulation, whereby his displeasure might be covered and concealed till he had

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attained his revenge, that he never endeavoured to do any man an ill office before he told him first what he was to expect from him and reproached him for the injuries he had done.¹ Under the régime of such a personality it is evident that there was to be no meanness or deceit, but, on the other hand, no liberal-minded inclination to listen to counsel. All opposition was to be silenced instantly, and those offering it would fade out of public life. The Duke was never ready to listen to all sides of the question. His long apprenticeship under James, who had taught his favourite to expect his own way in most things, had turned a high-spirited enthusiasm into a headstrong passion. Foolishly had the King led the young George Villiers to believe, from the outset, that his word was and must be law, and that all attempts to gainsay him should be instantly quashed. England was to reap the harvest of dragon's teeth which James had then sown. We cannot but mourn this ruin of what was, in so many respects, a noble and generous personality.

The first in the new reign to feel the sting of Buckingham's displeasure was Sir Francis Cottington, who had, after his return from Spain, ventured to advise James that the Spaniards were in earnest over the matter of the Palatinate — 'That they did in truth desire it, and were fully resolved to gratify His Majesty in the business, and only desired the manner of it to gratify the Emperor and Duke of Bavaria all they could; which would take up little time.' For this attitude Sir Francis was now to suffer. When, one morning, in his capacity as Private Secretary, he was preparing to attend the King in his Privy Chamber, one of the secretaries of state came to him and told him that 'it was the King's pleasure that he should no more presume to come into these rooms'. At this moment Buckingham entered

¹ CLARENDON, *History of the Rebellion*, I, p. 55.

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the room, and without more ado Sir Francis walked boldly up to him and, remarking upon the recent evidences of his displeasure which he had experienced, desired to know 'whether it could not be in his power, by all dutiful application, and all possible service, to be restored to the good opinion his Grace had once vouchsafed to have of him and to be admitted to serve him?' The Duke listened to him without any show of emotion and with a serene countenance answered 'that he would deal very clearly with him: that it was utterly impossible to bring that to pass which he had proposed, that he was not only firmly resolved never to trust him or to have to do with him, but that he was, and would be always, his declared enemy: and that he would do always whatsoever lay in his power to ruin and destroy him, and of this he might be assured'.¹ Sir Francis, who saw that argument was hopeless, merely contented himself with remarking that he hoped the Duke would not suffer him to be the loser by this new animosity, since he had recently, by the Duke's command, not only laid out money in jewels and pictures, but had also, hoping to gain favour, presented him with a suit of hangings worth £800. Curtly Buckingham informed him that he had only to send in his account and every penny he had spent thus would be repaid. It was an object lesson the court was not likely to forget. The schemes of Charles and his minister from now on met with little conciliar opposition, and it was left to the bolder spirits on the Commons' Benches — should Parliament be sitting — to voice, at their own peril, the nation's growing discontent with the events to follow.

On April 3rd, 1625, Charles walked quietly across St. James's Park to his new quarters at Whitehall, with a complete absence of ceremony, to take up the reins of

¹ CLARENDON, *History of the Rebellion*, I, p. 33.

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government. His attention was immediately turned towards the conduct of the war, money was sent to assist Mansfeld and the King of Denmark in the land campaign, whilst the Navy was rapidly being prepared, Buckingham having loaned £30,000 to this object. The King made his first public appearance since his father's death at Blackwall, where he went to visit the shipping. Meanwhile a rendezvous at Plymouth had been arranged for twelve ships of the Royal Navy, twenty armed merchantmen, and thirty transport vessels. Ten thousand soldiers were to be pressed for service. The expedition was to sail under the personal command of Buckingham, and men wondered eagerly what was to be its destination. The original idea of the Lord Admiral was known to have been an attack upon a Spanish fortress town and the seizure of the treasure fleet, now on the way back from South America laden with its rich cargo. But now Buckingham had reacted violently to a chance remark passed at the Hague that both England and Holland would be the richer if the piratical headquarters in the Flanders ports were stormed and cleared out. Such a scheme necessarily demanded the concurrence, if not the assistance of France, and it was in an effort to secure this co-operation that Buckingham determined to make a personal visit to the French Court, forgetting how little his personality had availed him in Spain. He hoped that this time the magic of his presence would induce the cautious and non-committal Richelieu to cast his weight definitely on the side of England in the forthcoming struggle. The advent of this rash and passionate young diplomatist must have been a grievous trial to the sagacious Cardinal, who liked to proceed warily in all things, and above all shuddered at the idea of taking any of Buckingham's famous leaps in the dark.

After the King's death the Duke had given up his

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intended visit to France as proxy for the marriage, which had already taken place in front of the great west door of Notre-Dame. Buckingham had intended to sail across the channel in command of the fleet which was to bring Henrietta Maria to England, but now he was once again fired with all the ardour of a new scheme, and burning with enthusiasm to suggest his ideas in person to Richelieu and the French King.

One evening towards the end of May Buckingham arrived in Paris and took up his lodging at the house of the Duke of Chevreuse. To the Venetian ambassador he declared that he had simply come to hasten the departure of the bride; to the casual observer it seemed that his sole object was to dazzle a court well accustomed to splendour with the brilliance of his personality. His famous white satin suit, magnificently studded with diamonds, took the French courtiers by storm, and to many of the ladies he became something of a demi-god. The tall, handsome Englishman set all feminine hearts aflutter, and from the moment of his arrival one lady, at least, of very high rank was more than willing to forget her husband and station in his presence. For Buckingham had captured the girlish imagination of no less a person than the Queen of France, the volatile and pleasure-loving Anne. In the company of the Duke Anne was a charmed being, sunning herself in the warmth of his pleasant courtesy and unmasked admiration. She, at any rate, was convinced of his political wisdom and listened most attentively to his grandiloquent speeches of the diplomatic wonders he would work for France as a tribute to her charms.

Unfortunately, Richelieu and Louis did not show the same appreciation of Buckingham's designs, and in the field of diplomacy the Duke was not working the wonders he had anticipated. To a less ambitious statesman the

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concessions he did manage to wring out of the reluctant Louis might not have appeared so negligible. But Buckingham had staked his all on a desperate throw of the dice, and the lukewarm aid which France now offered him was nothing to show Parliament in return for the concessions demanded for the English Catholics. To Richelieu Buckingham had painted in glowing colours the prospects of a combined attack upon the Spanish Netherlands, from north and south simultaneously, hoping to dazzle him by the tempting spectacle of the annexation by France of the Spanish province of Artois. Surely, he argued, in consideration of the military glory which must ensue, together with territorial aggrandisement, the French could not fail to desire his alliance. In return, he merely asked the trifling matter of a few concessions to the French Huguenots.

It was a blow to find his overtures, if not rejected, at least very coolly received. The experienced Richelieu trembled at Buckingham's impetuous onslaughts upon the wavering Louis, to whom the slightest semblance of a threat was anathema. Afraid of the independence of his Huguenot subjects he veered away from the English alliance, afraid of the domination of Spain he inclined towards it. Perhaps had Buckingham exercised a little tact — a quality which unfortunately he did not possess — he and Richelieu together could have led the French King in the path where he now refused to be driven. The bribe of Artois moved him not, and at the most he would only consent to give £100,000 towards the King of Denmark's expenses, to pay Mansfeld for seven months longer, and to reinforce him with two thousand French cavalry. With regard to the Spanish war and the recovery of the Palatinate he absolutely refused to commit himself, but he did send a nobleman to Rochelle to invite the

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Huguenots there to send deputies to Paris to take part in peace negotiations.

Buckingham, rightly or wrongly, felt thwarted. From his standpoint, his mission had failed completely in its object, and it is said that he used bitter language when speaking to the Queen Mother at Amiens, declaring that although the Huguenots might come to Paris on their knees to beg for peace, it must be with rapiers in their hands.

His bitter feelings against France made him all the more ready to listen to one who had seized his opportunity to pour into the Duke's ear insidious hints that perhaps, after all, the Spanish alliance might be more valuable than he had thought. Peter Paul Rubens — ambitious to shine as brightly in the field of diplomacy as in the world of art — had come to Paris in 1620 at the invitation of Marie de Medici, with a commission to ornament the Palace of the Luxembourg with pictures representing the cavalcade of her reign. The Queen's coffers, however, were usually empty, and up to the present Rubens had found that there was little financial return for his labour. But with the appearance of the magnificent Duke of Buckingham in Paris, the artist found a generous patron, who paid him handsomely for the splendid portrait which he had commissioned him to paint.

As may be imagined, whilst the famous favourite was sitting in the studio of the great master, the conversation would turn in the direction of politics. Buckingham vented his bitterness against France into a sympathetic ear, and had his wounded pride soothed by the suggestion that France was not the only ally worth seeking, and that perhaps even now Spain might have more to offer him. It was all very delicately done, there was no attempt to force Buckingham into an alliance with Spain — which, indeed,

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he was hardly ready to consider — but the seed of an idea had been sown and the artist was content to wait for its germination.

It is unfortunate that in Rubens Buckingham did not find sufficient outlet for his wounded vanity, so that he need not have been guilty of the supreme indiscretion he now committed. There is no doubt that by this time his mood was angry and desperate, and he was ready to seize any opportunity to avenge himself upon the vacillating Louis. The means lay ready to his hand. Anne of Austria — Louis's wife — had shown no aversion to a flirtation with the young English Ambassador, and it must have occurred to him at this point that it would be a splendid retaliation could he induce the impressionable Queen to fall a victim to his charms. Her love would flatter his vanity, satisfy his desire for revenge, and provide a very pleasant little diversion.

So one evening in early June, Buckingham was walking with Anne in the beautiful gardens of her palace on the banks of the Somme. As they strolled down a lovely avenue, bordered on one side by lofty elms, and on the other by a tall trellis covered with wistaria, the magic of the soft June moonlight provided a perfect — if dangerous — setting for a love scene. They were alone, and suddenly it appears that Buckingham began to whisper impetuous words of passion to the Queen. Woman-like, having walked into the net she now desired to be out of it, and screamed for her attendants. When they arrived on the scene they found Anne strangely discomposed and the Duke leaning defiantly against the trellis, grasping the hilt of his sword with one hand. Yet the Queen betrayed no sign that his conduct had been improper, and merely remarked that she was alarmed at 'finding herself alone with Monsieur l'ambassadeur'.



MINIATURE OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA
From an enamel by Petitot in the Victoria and Albert Museum
By permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum

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A few days later, Buckingham had to tear himself away from Amiens, for the embassy was ended and he must conduct Henrietta Maria back to her husband. It is said that he openly displayed all the emotions of a despairing lover at his separation from Anne. Then came a thoroughly unlicensed piece of conduct. At Abbéville, on his return journey, the Duke was met by a courier with information which necessitated his return. Back at Amiens, he confided the tidings he had just learnt to the Queen Mother, and then asked for an interview with Anne. As was usual in those days, he was introduced into her private chamber — she not yet having risen — and in the presence of her ladies in waiting, he threw himself on his knees by her bedside, and burying his face in the pillow poured forth a flood of devoted and impassioned declarations. Anne complained of his audacity, but was no doubt stirred and flattered at his show of emotion, and did not show the amount of anger his presumption deserved. This affair does not show Buckingham in a pleasant light, and naturally his critics have made the most of it to prove him immoral and licentious. But the very openness of his conduct leads us to the conclusion that he was indulging his vanity, finding a strange satisfaction in making love to the Queen herself and winning her affection from her husband in the full sight of the whole court. Yet if Buckingham's wounded pride was appeased by his making a laughing-stock of Louis, the difficulties of the political situation were merely aggravated. Louis conceived a violent dislike for the impetuous Duke, and from now on showed a marked disinclination to trust, or even to listen to, his overtures.

Indeed when Henrietta Maria arrived at Dover on June 12th, it seemed that she, poor child, was the only tangible result of all the recent diplomacy. It was about eight o'clock on a Saturday evening when the young Queen

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set foot on English soil, feeling more than a little tired and sick after a not too calm journey. That night she stayed at Dover Castle, and by ten o'clock next morning King Charles, eager to greet his bride, came down to Dover to meet her. Upon his arrival she went to him and knelt at his feet, taking his hand and kissing it. Whereupon Charles laughingly stooped to her, and taking her up in his arms kissed her and asked her about her journey, all the time looking down at her feet for she seemed taller than reputed, reaching up to his shoulder. Noticing this, she showed him her shoes, saying to him, 'Sir, I stand upon mine own feet. I have no helps by art. Thus high am I and am neither higher than lower.'¹ This quick-witted, dark-haired, dark-eyed little person of sixteen, with her quiet dignity and self-possession, seems to have delighted Charles, and a contemporary observes, 'Yesterday I saw them coming up from Gravesend, and never beheld the King look so merrily'.²

In truth, the British folk could not find it in their hearts to be harsh to one so young and charming, and one and all delighted in the royal romance, greeting their young King and Queen with loyal acclamation on their way up to London. For was she not a daughter of that valiant Protestant, Henry of Navarre? Forsooth, men murmured, there were hopes of her conversion, for when asked if she could abide a Huguenot, she had merrily replied, 'Why not? Was not my father one?'³ At five o'clock on the evening of Thursday, June 16th, to the accompaniment of a great shower of rain, the new King and Queen, both gaily dressed in green, passed under London Bridge on their way to Whitehall attended by many barges of honour. The rain did not deter the young couple from graciously showing themselves to their people, and the banks of the river

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 196.

² BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 31.

³ *Ibid.*

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echoed and re-echoed with cheers as the Queen put her hand out of the windows of the royal barge and waved to the crowd. The Thames was crowded with vessels of all descriptions, and no less than fifty ships discharged their cannon in honour of their new sovereigns. Charles was gay and happy, for this demonstration of loyalty seemed an auspicious opening to the reign.

But superstitious folk regarded it as of ill omen that King Charles and his first Parliament should have to meet at Westminster during the raging of one of the worst plagues London had seen. The weekly mortality in the city often approached two hundred, and members came up to Parliament at their own risk. From this a poor attendance might have been expected, but on the contrary, contemporaries are unanimous in declaring that there had never been a keener fight for places in the House of Commons. From all quarters of England men had come up to the plague-stricken capital, impelled partly by a natural curiosity to see their new King, and partly by an anxious desire for some explanation of the warlike preparations he was making, and the line his future policy was to take. Should this coincide with their own desires, they were in no mood to thwart him by refusing the necessary supplies.

But two things had happened since James had last spoken to the nation's representatives at Westminster — Charles had married a French Princess and entered into an unproductive French alliance, whilst a continental campaign had been undertaken and badly bungled. Whatever might be the Commons' idea of a war against Spain it did not include French co-operation or continental warfare, even attended by good results, so with the results as they now stood the session seemed likely to be stormy.

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When Charles stood up to deliver his opening speech to the Houses, he had a task few would have envied, and he fulfilled it in a typical way. It never even entered his head to explain the reasons for the steps he and Buckingham had taken. Without enlightening Parliament at all, he gaily expected them to vote him large supplies for the conduct of a war into whose secrets they had not been initiated. Characteristically Charles reminded them that it was their duty to support him — 'I pray you remember that this being my first action, and begun by your advice and entreaty, what a great dishonour it were both to you and me if this action so begun should fail for want of assistance.'¹

At first the members regarded the omissions in the King's speech as proceeding from his youth and inexperience, and were inclined to find his terseness a relief after James's lengthy harangues. But it soon became evident that no responsible minister had been commissioned to give them that explanation of policy which they daily awaited, and meanwhile, with the plague an increasing menace, their position was unenviable. So it was proposed that the Houses should adjourn, in view of the plague, until a more favourable time could be found for the inquiry which must precede a vote of supplies. The Commons did not wish to offend their young King by being too hasty, and it was in an effort to inform him as politely as possible that he had not their full confidence, that they proceeded on June 30th to vote him the totally inadequate amount of £100,000 for the prosecution of his gigantic schemes abroad. After an ominous speech from Phelips, the grant was raised to £140,000, with a plea to the King 'to proceed in his governments by grave and wise counsel'.² The recent disasters had been mentioned — however gingerly — by Phelips, and though as yet no one named the Duke of

¹ *Debates in the House of Commons in 1625* (ed. GARDINER), p. 1. ² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

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Buckingham, there were few in whose thoughts he was not present as the proceedings continued.

Charles accepted graciously the obvious rebuff they had given him, and without further argument instructed the Lord Keeper to tell them that they might disperse, in view of the increasing toll of the plague. Many interpreted this to mean that the session was at an end, and more than three-quarters of the members departed for home, leaving a much depleted Parliament to conclude the proceedings. The King, despite Buckingham's active intervention, gained no satisfaction in the main business of obtaining supplies, and, since money was urgently needed for the preparation of the fleet, when the session finally closed on July 11th, the Houses were informed that it was merely an adjournment, not a prorogation, and a meeting was fixed for August 1st, Oxford being selected as likely to provide a healthier locality.

In the interim occurred an affair for which Buckingham was to incur much odium. In his last treaty with France James had promised to lend some twenty ships to Louis to assist him in an undertaking against Genoa. The engagement still held good, but signs had not been wanting that the French King was considering using these ships to assist him in a projected attack upon his Protestant subjects in La Rochelle. The loan had been delayed as long as possible, but when, during his embassy in June, Buckingham found that Louis seemed ready to treat for peace with the Huguenots, Charles and he felt that the time was ripe for the carrying out of the obligations. As yet they had no reason to suspect the genuineness of Louis's peaceful intentions towards the Huguenots, and they hoped that the ships would merely be used against France's foreign enemies. So Captain John Pennington was dispatched to France as Admiral in command of eight ships, some of them

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merchantmen whose owners had only been quietened by the assurance that they would not be used against the Protestants. On May 18th, Pennington, still waiting to sail, had received a letter from Sir John Coke, directing him very definitely 'that no clauses in the instructions given by the Lord Admiral, nor in the contract between the French Ambassador and the Commissioners of the Navy are to be strained to engage him, or the ships under his command, in the civil wars of the French.'¹ He was to serve the French King against foreign enemies alone. When therefore, upon his arrival off the French coast, the Duke of Montmorency, Admiral of France, came on his ship and commanded him to take aboard three hundred French soldiers, he declined to receive more than sixty. Further, upon hearing that the ships were to be used against the Huguenots under Soubise, Pennington replied angrily that he would fulfil the letter of the contract and no more. The French left him, declaring their intention of writing to the English King, and in the meantime Pennington wrote to Buckingham, letting him know what had happened, and requesting further orders. None arriving, he brought his ships back to the English coast, his crews swearing that they would rather be hanged or thrown overboard than fight against their fellow Protestants and the gallant Soubise.

Pennington's action was not rebellion but merely a faithful attempt to carry out the instructions given to him by Coke. Meanwhile affairs at the French Court had been leading — or perhaps misleading — Charles and Buckingham to change their views. At the end of June there had been no mistaking the meaning of those in authority. To Lorkin, the new English agent, Richelieu had said: 'Peace will be made (i.e. with the Huguenots), assure yourself of that', whilst another French minister spoke even more

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 65.

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definitely: 'If only the King of England will show that he means to assist the King against the rebels, peace will soon be made.'¹

This explains the fact that on July 10th Pennington received orders to return to Dieppe and take aboard as many Frenchmen as the French Admiral ordered. The next day Sir John Coke forwarded to Secretary Conway the news that the Captains of the merchant ships considered themselves freed from any engagements in the matter, refusing to allow their ships to be used for such a purpose: 'The owners say their ships are their freeholds, and they say they are English free-born and will not put themselves into French jurisdiction. Our seamen generally are most resolute Protestants and will rather be killed or thrown overboard than compelled to shed the blood of Protestants.'²

In a vain effort to please all parties by astute dissimulation Buckingham's secretary Nicholas was now dispatched to Dieppe with the following instructions, recorded by his own pen: 'To employ my best endeavour to hinder or at least delay the delivery of the ships to the French, but therein so to carry myself that the Ambassador might not discern but that I was sent of purpose, and with full instructions and command to effect his desire, and to cause all the ships to be put into his hands.' In the disputes which followed he did his best to carry out these instructions, bidding Pennington and the Captains give up their ships whenever the French were present, but behind their backs urging them to do nothing of the kind. Pennington played his part by declaring that his men were so mutinous that he could do nothing with them. To Buckingham he stated his position clearly enough: 'I had rather live my life with bread and water,' he wrote, 'than betray my King and

¹ GARDINER, v, p. 381.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 58.

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country of so precious a jewel as this.¹ Rather than surrender his ship for such a purpose he would forfeit his life. It was, no doubt, with the connivance of their commander that his men now mutinied, weighed anchor, and set sail for England on board the *Vanguard*. The merchant ships remained at Dieppe, but their commanders refused to give them up. When Pennington and the mutineers were come to anchor in the Downs, the former sent an express messenger to Buckingham, informing him of what had happened and that his men would sooner be hanged than return to France. But Charles and Buckingham were again wavering, having heard more definite news from France on July 19th that peace was to be made with the Huguenots. On July 28th, therefore, Pennington received a grave note from Buckingham, informing him that 'the King was extremely angry with him for his delay in consigning the *Vanguard*, and has sent him a strict and express warrant which, if he desires to make his peace, he must not fail punctually to obey. He and the merchants may do so with better courage, peace being made with those of Rochelle'.² So August 3rd saw Pennington sailing back to Dieppe to place the ships at the service of the French, though only one of the sailors consented to enter the service of the detested foreigner. Charles and Buckingham felt quite pleased with themselves, expecting that their admirable diplomatic fencing until they were sure peace was concluded, must win them universal approbation in the forthcoming session of Parliament. They did not know that this affair of the ships had not yet run its course, and was to bring more than enough misery upon them ere it was ended.

The Parliament at Oxford met in a factious mood, and proceeded to attack with fury the religious concessions

¹ CABALA, p. 321.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 75.

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which had been granted to the Catholics. Buckingham, tired by now of the French alliance which had proved so unproductive, decided to throw it overboard and go the way of Parliament by promising to tighten up the penal laws. But he was too late. Men no longer trusted him, he was known to be a weathercock, and the ill feeling in Parliament began to veer more definitely in his direction. There was talk of the days 'when old ambassadors of wisdom and experience were employed, when our treaties and negotiations abroad were not unsuccessful.'¹ No names were mentioned, but it was understood to imply that under a certain young and inexperienced ambassador, all our treaties had so far come to nothing.

On August 4th when the King came from Woodstock to meet the Houses in Christ Church Hall he had little to tell them, contenting himself with asking for a subsidy for the fleet and saying he would answer the petition they had presented on religion within two days. Charles did not give the members his full confidence but hoped, by dropping hints, to move them to a liberal generosity. However, they had reached the point where nothing fruitful could be achieved until they enjoyed the royal confidence and were no longer to be kept in the dark. At length Phelips voiced the general dissatisfaction. 'In the Government,' he stated clearly, 'there hath wanted good advice. Counsels and power have been monopolized.' All knew at whom he was striking, but he proceeded to go further than an attack upon Buckingham's power: 'The match has not yet brought the French to join with us in a defensive war, or any longer than conduceth to their own ends. The French army, which they say is gone, we hear is upon return. In Germany the King of Denmark hath done nothing. The best way to secure ourselves is to sup-

¹ Debates in the House of Commons in 1625, p. 68.

press the Papists here.' In conclusion, he desired that they should content themselves with the estate and government of the realm and 'make this Parliament the reformer of the Commonwealth'.¹

Phelips had stated the position of the Commons — they would wash their hands of all this foreign diplomacy which they could never hope to comprehend, since it was not explained to them, and devote themselves to the reform of domestic affairs. Charles and Buckingham had started and conducted this war — let them finish it unaided and shoulder all the responsibility! In spite of further violent debates in which Buckingham's followers vainly tried to win over the Commons, they remained unshaken in their firm attitude. It was in a final desperate attempt to regain his lost popularity that Buckingham now decided to make a definite concession with regard to the enforcement of the penal laws, choosing to forget all he had formerly promised to the French Ambassador. He spent Sunday, August 7th, with the Council, debating that the promise drawn up and signed by James had been merely an elaborate plan to hoodwink the Pope. Perhaps no one but Buckingham would have been capable of persuading himself that he was not acting with the most profound duplicity, and dealing the French King an insult which a proud Government was hardly likely to stomach.

With all confidence Buckingham repaired next morning to Christ Church Hall, where he had ordered the Commons to assemble that he might acquaint them with the King's declaration. Even now his voice rang with assurance and he seemed moved by a genuine sincerity to point out to them the high wisdom of the course he advocated. Hoping to sweeten their mood at the outset he commenced by stating that they were to have all that they desired respect-

¹ Debates in the House of Commons in 1625, p. 82.

ing the treatment of the Roman Catholics. With regard to his foreign policy let us listen to him speaking:

'Now the Valtelline is at liberty, the war is in Italy: the King of Denmark hath an army of 17,000 foot and 6000 horse, and commissions out to make them 30,000: the King of Sweden declares himself: the Princes of the Union take heart: the King of France is engaged in a war against the King of Spain, hath peace with his subjects, and is joined in a league with Savoy and Venice. This being the state of things then and now, I hope to have from you the same success of being well construed which then I had: for since that time I have not had a thought, nor entered into any action but what might tend to the advancement of the business, and please your desires. But if I should give ear and credit, which I do not, to rumours, then I might speak with some confusion, fearing not to hold so good a place in your opinion as then you gave me whereof I have still the same ambition and I hope to deserve it.'

In spite of all the recent disasters Buckingham was even now optimistic enough to imagine that he could argue and explain himself back into the affections of the people and regain that popularity he had so irretrievably lost. His self-confidence was still unshaken: 'When I consider the integrity of mine own soul and heart to the King and State, I receive courage and confidence. Whereupon I make this request, that you will believe that if any amongst you in discharge of their opinion, and conscience, say anything that may reflect upon particular persons, that I shall be the last in the world to make application of it to myself; being so well assured of your justice, that without cause you will not fall on him that was so lately approved by you, and who will never do anything to irritate any man to have other opinion of me than of a faithful, true-hearted Englishman.'

The unmistakable sincerity in Buckingham's account of

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himself leads us inevitably to the conclusion that he honestly believed he was speaking the truth, and had not stood up with the avowed intention of deceiving his listeners. In all his great designs he seems always to have had the future glory of his country before him, mixed though it might be with the desire for the lustre which would thereby attach itself to his own name. Examining his objects we frequently find him actuated by the most noble and uplifting visions — it was his method of attainment which fell far short of his ideals.

Let us go back to Christ Church Hall and hear the rest of Buckingham's explanation of his actions. After refuting the suggestion that he had acted without counsel — for had he not consulted with a Council of War in all matters? — he proceeded to deny vigorously the idea that the fleet would never sail. Did the Commons think that Charles and he wished to make themselves the laughing-stock of Europe?

At the end of the speech came the part which all members awaited with bated breath — the account of his future plans from his own lips. 'Hitherto,' he declared, 'I have spoken of nothing but the immense charge which the Kingdom is not well able to bear if it should continue: The King of Denmark £30,000 a month; Mansfeld's army £20,000; the army of the Low Countries £8000; Ireland £2600; besides twelve ships preparing to second the fleet.' The alternative which he suggested for this heavy expenditure on alliances was not likely, in the present state of things, to appeal to his hearers: 'Make my master chief of this war,' he cried, 'and by that you shall give his allies better assistance than if you give them £100,000 a month. What is it for his allies to scratch with the King of Spain, to win a battle to-day and lose one to-morrow, and to get or lose a town by snatches? But to go with a conquest by land the King of Spain is so strong, it is impossible to do so. But let my master

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be chief of the war and make a diversion, the enemy spends the more: he must draw from other places and so you give to them.'¹ This was fine rhetoric, no doubt delivered with burning passion, but it made little or no effect upon the thoroughly disillusioned House. Nothing was further from their thoughts than the voting of a *carte blanche* to Charles.

Apparently Buckingham's reference in the closing sentences of his speech was to a war by sea, which he imagined would do more for their cause than the continued payment of continental allies. So far the Commons were with him, but they wanted to make a more direct attack upon Spain, and would fain have dissolved the continental alliances and terminated England's share in the German war. But Buckingham — without asking Parliament for definite support — had dropped hints that he was not altogether abandoning these alliances. Perhaps he was counting on paying his allies from the proceeds of the treasure fleet — when he had captured it! In any case, his explanation was not satisfactory to the Commons. It left them vague, and offered them no definite policy to support by grants of subsidies. In addition, his speech had done much to alienate the French, by its frank abandonment of James's promises of toleration to the Roman Catholics, and had turned a large section of the latter body into his avowed enemies. Altogether, far from winning him that popularity he had hoped for, it left him more isolated than before.

The debate in Parliament which followed became vitriolic upon the arrival of news that 800 Englishmen had been captured at sea by Moorish pirates, and that only eight leagues from Lands End! Meanwhile it was common knowledge that Pennington's ships were on their way to help the French King — against the Protestants, most men believed. Why did not the Lord Admiral employ

¹ The speech is printed in *Debates in the House of Commons in 1625*, pp. 95-102.

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his ships in the far more worthy object of suppressing the pirates off our own coasts? At length the indignation against him burst its bounds and this time he was attacked by name, 'Let us lay the fault where it is,' said Seymour, 'the Duke of Buckingham is trusted, and it must needs be either in him or his agents'.¹ Phelps went even further, declaring that the safety of the country was too precious to be entrusted to those incapable of discharging their office. For the first time something very much akin to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility had been plainly stated by the Commons, and when they proposed to go into Committee to draw up a petition on these lines to present to Charles, the King decided to silence his rebellious subjects by the only means within his power.

On the fateful morning chosen by the Commons for drawing up their petition, they had scarcely taken their seats when Black Rod was at the door to order their dissolution. The remonstrance was rushed through, to the accompaniment of Black Rod knocking at the door. When at last the doors were opened, it was finished, and the first Parliament of Charles had terminated its brief existence. But the struggle between King and Parliament had only just commenced, not to end until Charles's son, James, was forced to vacate his throne in favour of a Dutch Prince more than sixty years later.

In defending Buckingham, Charles knew that he was fighting no less for his own prerogative, for never up to the present had it been an underlying principle that the King's ministers should answer to Parliament for doing his bidding. Elizabeth had effectively silenced her Parliaments for meddling in matters touching upon the royal prerogative. The formulation by the Stuarts of elaborate theories regarding the divinity of the Kingship has led posterity to exaggerate

¹ Debates in the House of Commons in 1625, p. 118.

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the originality of Charles's ideas. In reality he was breaking no precedents in fighting to preserve his authority. In his struggle to save Buckingham — whom he honestly believed to be acting wisely and effectively in the nation's interests — he probably never thought of divine right as such, but merely sought to protect his friend from the attacks of those who seemed to him to be dominated by a vicious thirst for power.

The Commons likewise had perhaps never stopped to analyse their motives, and far from being guided by any political theory of limiting the royal sovereignty, honestly believed that they were protecting the King, no less than the nation, from one whose inefficiency no longer entitled him to wield such supreme powers. Never had they made a greater blunder. Events were to show that to Charles the person of Buckingham was sacred. A contemporary, commenting on this aspect of the question, very naively observes: 'A happy moderation doubtless it had been in the House of Commons if at this meeting they had winked at the Duke's errors, and fallen upon the consideration of many particulars in Church and Commonwealth, which more needed their help and assistance.'¹

Buckingham himself seldom showed any great fear of Parliament, and was indeed more friendly to this institution than was his royal master. It was not until after Buckingham's death that Charles proceeded to rule without a Parliament. The Duke always imagined that he would be able, when he met his detractors face to face, to win their loyal acclamation and support by the brilliant arguments he had to offer in his own defence. We never find him unwilling to take his place before the nation's representatives to give some enthusiastic account of his schemes for the future, despite his past failures which he was ever prone to ascribe to accident.

¹ SIMONDS D'EWES, *Autobiography*, I, p. 279.

THE EXPEDITION TO CADIZ

SANGUINE as ever, despite the recent attacks upon him, Buckingham now proceeded to devote himself simultaneously to what he hoped would be a brilliant diplomatic coup and a splendid naval victory. His original design of seizing some Spanish seaport fortress, and then taking the treasure fleet now on its way from America, had not been forgotten, and ever since the May of 1625 raw levies had been pouring into Plymouth ready for service, most of them becoming an ever increasing menace to the surrounding country. It was now high time for the great expedition to sail, if they were to seize the Spanish fortress before the return of the treasure fleet. When he confronted another Parliament Buckingham hoped to have at his disposal the wealth of the Indies, with Spain lying prostrate at his feet.

At first he himself had intended to go in person in command of the fleet, but now his services were required for the diplomatic embassy to construct a Protestant alliance in Northern Europe for the recovery of the Palatinate and the prosecution of the German war. The Duke felt that he would be more valuable as a diplomatist than as Admiral of the fleet, so he solaced himself with the title of 'generalissimo', delegating the actual command to Sir Edward Cecil. Though well tried in land warfare, and a valiant soldier, Cecil knew nothing of naval tactics, and there were loud expressions of discontent because in the choice of officers Sir Robert Mansell, an experienced sea commander, who had dared to speak against Buckingham in the last Parliament, had been passed over. The Vice-Admiral was

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to be the Earl of Essex — again a valiant soldier, but quite unversed in naval affairs, whilst the Earl of Denbigh's only qualification for the part of Rear Admiral, men said, was that he happened to be Buckingham's brother-in-law. With such inexperience amongst the commanders, the expedition, even if splendidly equipped, was in a fair away to disaster.

With its equipment as it now stood, its failure seemed a miserably foregone conclusion. Cecil quickly perceived that the men who had been so hastily pressed for service scarcely knew one end of a musket from the other. The arms, indeed, with which they should have been practising still lay aboard the ships in the harbour. According to one report, the soldiers did not possess 'the wherewithal to cover their nakedness',¹ and their starving condition led them to pillage the surrounding country, killing sheep before the farmers' eyes. With such a rabble Cecil may well have despaired of success at the outset, and wondered how he was to deserve the new dignity of Viscount Wimbledon, conferred upon him in anticipation of his forthcoming triumph! Never had he seen anything less suggestive of victory than the miserable sights which daily met his eyes at Plymouth.

The trouble lay in the fact that there was no efficient central administration for the supervision of the troops and their provisions, and the local authorities were in a state of complete confusion. Buckingham had taken too many duties upon himself, and, unwilling to delegate any of his powers to a competent subordinate, found himself faced by chaos on all sides. The outspoken Lord Cromwell, newly returned from Holland and the miseries of Mansfeld's expedition, ventured at this point to give the Duke some sound advice. 'They say the Lords of the Council

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 177.

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know nothing of Count Mansfeld's journey or this fleet,' he wrote, 'which discontents even the best sort, if not all. They say, it is a very great burden your Grace takes upon you, since none knows anything but you. It is conceived that not letting others bear part of the burden you now bear, it may ruin you (which Heaven forbid). Much discourse there is of your Lordship here and there, as I passed home and back, and nothing is more wondered at, than that one grave man is not known to have your ear, except, they say, my good and noble Lord Conway. All men say, if you go out with the Fleet, you will suffer in it, because, if it prosper, it will be thought no act of yours, and if it succeed ill, they will say it might have been better had you not guided the King. They say your undertakings in the Kingdom will much prejudice your Grace.'¹ But no doubt Buckingham tossed this letter of warning contemptuously on one side, and continued boldly and fearlessly in his ambitious designs.

On October 8th, 1625, eighty ships spread their canvas to the winds which were to bear them upon their gallant enterprise against the Spaniard. Many of the hulls were rotten, and some of the badly patched canvas had seen the historic battle of the Armada. The 'ten brave regiments' they carried were half starved, wholly unpatriotic and thoroughly anxious to have done with the whole affair and get back home. Thousands of raw recruits do not make an army. The commanders had seen enough to justify the most complete despondency. There had not even been sufficient foresight in the councils at home to fix the point of attack, and it was only after a hastily summoned council, on rounding Cape St. Vincent, that it was decided to land quietly at St. Mary Port in Cadiz Bay and thence spring a surprise attack upon San Lucar, twelve miles away.

¹ CABALA, p. 377.

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But alas for their plans! On entering Cadiz Bay, the eyes of Essex saw a sight too inviting to pass by — the sails of some twelve Spanish ships with galleys by their side, proudly lying at anchor near the walls of Cadiz. Forgetting all orders, he set off to the attack in his vessel the *Swiftsure*. In vain did Cecil try to get the rest of the expedition to follow the headstrong Earl, hoping to repair his mistake. The half mutinous crews were not of the same stuff as the Elizabethan sailors who had won such glorious victories in these very waters, and Essex was left to attack the Spanish galleons on his own. The Spaniards, no doubt thinking that a tremendous fleet followed the *Swiftsure*, fled up the harbour. Now was the moment to follow them up and by one brilliant coup crown the expedition with undying glory. But the commanders displayed an utter lack of initiative, and nothing was done. The English fleet quietly anchored, deciding now to attack Puntal next day, having given the Spaniards fair warning of their presence. As might be expected, the enemy proceeded to fortify and provision Cadiz, and all hopes of a surprise attack were at an end.

The rest of this wretched expedition is dismal reading, for most of the stories which are left are almost too disgraceful to bear examination. In the attack upon Fort Puntal under cover of the darkness next night, five Dutch ships and twenty Newcastle colliers had been ordered to open fire. Next morning Cecil found out that the English ships had basely deserted their comrades, and that the Dutchmen, most unequally matched, had lost two ships and had to withdraw. In a vain effort to spur the cowardly soldiers he rowed about amongst them, but with no result. At length an attack upon the fort was commenced by the *Swiftsure* and a few more vessels of the Royal Navy, with the timid merchantmen huddling miserably

behind. When one of the latter fired a shot through the stern of the *Swiftsure*, Essex furiously ordered the attack to cease. It was only by landing troops that Puntal — which should have fallen almost immediately to so large a force — was taken by the English in the late evening. By now Cadiz was so strongly garrisoned that all hopes of its capture seemed at an end.

In the meantime a company of half-starved wretches had been led by Cecil upon a six miles' tramp to meet an enemy reported to be approaching from the north. They had set out hurriedly with no provisions, and now, desperately thirsty after their long tramp in the hot sun, they fell with avidity upon some casks of wine found in houses upon the route. The poor wretches drank their fill, despite their officers' commands to desist, and ere long this detachment of the British army sprawled in the ditches in a state of wild intoxication. Their commander finally had to abandon them, leaving them open to Spanish attack, for all attempts to move them were futile.

Having thus lost time and men, Cecil returned to Puntal to find that the general opinion was that the Spanish position was so impregnable as to render attack impossible. In truth, had a properly combined action taken place, it was by no means impossible, but this miserable expedition had no stomach for a fight. The fleet from America was now expected, so it was decided to abandon Cadiz and sail to surprise it. On October 28th the great expedition majestically left Cadiz harbour, after as abject a failure as had ever been witnessed. Worse was yet to come, for the Spanish treasure fleet far out in the Atlantic had received warning rumours, and this year made a wide detour, sailing warily up the coasts of Africa to Cadiz by the south, whilst the English fleet waited off the southern coast of Portugal. On November 16th Cecil, seeing that they could hold out

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no longer, gave orders to sail home without waiting any longer for the treasure fleet — which, could he but have known it, had lain quietly in Cadiz harbour since the last day of October.

The returning fleet was in a sorry plight. The men had fallen victims to the most terrible sickness, mortality was on the increase, drink was scarce, whilst their food, said one officer, 'stinks so as no dog of Paris Garden would eat it'.¹ The ships were leaky and many of their sails half rotten. There would indeed be sore criticism of the management of this ill-fated outfit when it arrived at Plymouth to tell its sorry story.

Whilst Cecil and his half-starved crews were vainly waiting in Portuguese waters, Buckingham had arrived at the Hague, and by November 9th was dazzling the eyes of staid Dutchmen by his brilliant personality and magnificent attire. It was soon clear that in his new scheme of alliances he had definitely thrown France overboard. He is said to have declared: 'I acknowledge the power of the King of France. But I doubt his goodwill.'²

The alliance he offered was, however, useless without money, and it was in an effort to raise temporary funds until Parliament should meet and grant supplies that Charles had finally decided to pawn what remained of the Crown Jewels. Inroads had already been made upon these hereditary possessions of the English monarchy by James, who had raised money on several valuable pieces to pay the expenses of his Scottish journey in 1617. It is much to the credit of the Spaniards that, upon the final breach with England, they had returned by Sir Francis Cottington most of the valuable gems which had been bestowed as presents by Charles and Buckingham. These, together with a few

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 174.

² GARDINER, VI, p. 35.

diamonds in the personal possession of the King would, it was hoped, satisfy the King of Denmark for the time being. It was hardly anticipated that there would be much trouble in inducing the wealthy merchants of Amsterdam to take the jewels in pledge, but on a mission of such paramount importance Charles felt that he required the services of his most trusted minister. Buckingham took with him £60,000 of his own money to help pay the expenses of the King of Denmark, and pawned his own jewels for the further sum of £30,000. This readiness to pledge his private fortune is a sufficient demonstration that his heart and soul were in the cause, in whose chances of success he had a genuine — if misplaced — belief.

The instructions drawn up for Buckingham in his diplomatic embassy had directed him to make some effort to reduce the enormous monthly sum of £30,000 with which the English King had originally contracted to supply Christian of Denmark. But it soon became obvious that such a reduction would be followed by the complete withdrawal of the Danish King from the war upon the Emperor, so that when, on November 29th, the Treaty of the Hague was drawn up between England, Holland and Denmark, we find Buckingham solemnly promising to supply Denmark with the original sum of £30,000 a month. The States General were to allow her the more modest amount of £5000 a month.

Had Buckingham knowingly entered into an engagement which he could not fulfil? At first sight, this seems very much the case, but an attempt to follow the probable workings of his mind seems to clear him of any charge of false dealings. He counted for the immediate future upon his own private funds and what he could raise on the Crown Jewels. And, with what appears to us altogether undue optimism, he daily expected news of the capture of the

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Spanish treasure fleet, and the wealth which would thereby flow into Charles's coffers. Sanguine in his dreams of brilliant conquest yet to come, he had no fear of facing the coming Parliament, which he hoped to win over to granting large subsidies in a tide of patriotic enthusiasm. He therefore considered it perfectly safe to pledge his master's word to the extent of £30,000 a month rather than lose the alliance of Denmark. The thought of failure Buckingham refused to consider—it simply never entered into his scheme of things. Even when his dream castles crashed about his ears, he emerged smiling from the wreckage and began to build them up again. We cannot but admire his spirit, whilst lamenting the miserable calamities in which it involved his country.

After the signing of the treaty between England, Holland and Denmark the Duke began to consider the desirability of securing France as a fourth on the list, but was met by a plain statement from the French Ambassador that he would not be welcomed in that country until the French cause in England stood in a more satisfactory position. Some there were who said that, in any case, Louis would not willingly tolerate the presence of the one who had had the temerity to make passionate love to his wife.

During the embassy at the Hague, there occurred a little incident which throws a pleasing light upon the nobler side of Buckingham's nature. Although he had not received a classical education, he was, none the less, like his royal master, a great patron of the arts. His agents were now scouring the States on his behalf, and in the course of their travels they encountered a collection of rare manuscripts, exquisitely written in Arabic, and sought out from the most remote parts of the world by the diligence of one Erpenius, a most excellent linguist. The widow of Erpenius, fallen on hard times, had been obliged to offer these

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treasures to the Jesuits at Antwerp, and it may be sure that she would have received no great price for them. Moved to generosity at the tale, Buckingham now instructed his secretary, Dr. Mason, to give the poor widow the magnificent sum of £500 for them, a price 'above their weight in silver',¹ according to a contemporary. After Buckingham's death the Duchess presented this collection to the University of Cambridge, since Dr. Mason informed her that, had he lived, the Duke intended to raise a collection of such documents to present to this University.

Buckingham remained in Holland for about the space of a month, returning to the dread story of the disaster which had befallen the much-counted-on expedition to Cadiz. According to one diarist, the King and Buckingham did not seem very much perturbed at the news, but if this were so they were unique among Englishmen. On December 16th the writs were issued for the election of members to the forthcoming Parliament, and from all parts of England zealous patriots, seething with ill-repressed indignation against those responsible for the recent blunders, were to take their places upon the Westminster benches.

Charles was summoning Parliament, not out of any desire to confer with the nation's representatives, but simply to wring from them a grant of supplies, now more than necessary if he were to fulfil his obligations abroad. Remembering the unseemly debates in the previous Parliament, he decided to avoid all such catechism this time, adopting a clever subterfuge to get rid of the unruly ring-leaders in the last assembly. Six members — Coke, Seymour, Phelips, Alford, Sir Guy Palmes and Sir Thomas Wentworth — were selected for the doubtful honour of a shrievalty. Since a sheriff was bound to attend to his

¹ WOTTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Miscellany*, v, p. 315.

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duties in his own county he could not be at the same time a member of Parliament. 'The rank weeds of Parliament,' optimistically wrote Rudyerd, who was hotly in favour of the war, 'are rooted up, so that we may expect a plentiful harvest. I pray God so temper the humours of our next assembly that out of it may result the inestimable harmony of agreement between the King and his people.' A pious hope, but it remained to be seen whether the hour would not yet produce its man, despite Charles's elaborate precautions.

Meanwhile, further trouble was brewing which, in this instance, was clearly not Buckingham's fault, although it was to be added to the list of his misdeeds by an irate Parliament. It seemed more than likely that Charles was going to meet his second Parliament with England openly at war with France. Trouble had started between the two countries when some French ships were seized by the English officials on the grounds that they carried contraband goods to the Spanish Netherlands. The French government demanded their restitution, which was refused. The dispute melted itself down to a demand for the restoration of one particular ship — the *St. Peter* of the port of Havre. Charles refused to give up the ship until the French King restored those eight English ships previously lent to him, and which he was now clearly planning to use against the Huguenots of La Rochelle. Charles now proceeded to couch his demands in the most rigorous terms, taking up a position which rendered open war imminent. On January 23rd he directed Buckingham to write to Holland and Carleton, then negotiating in France, that he would accept nothing less than the terms of the Treaty of Montpelier for the French Huguenots, and required the instant return of the ships he had lent Louis. If these demands were refused, the ambassadors must return immediately.

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Charles's bitter feelings towards the French King were no doubt due to a certain amount of misery he was experiencing in his connubial relationships, which he put down to the evil influence of the French courtiers in England. He complained violently to Buckingham in letter after letter about the insubordination of his young wife and the insolence of her foreign attendants, repeatedly requesting him to devise some means of getting rid of the latter. But the spirited Henrietta Maria refused to change her French ladies in waiting for the female relatives of Buckingham, and a sullen estrangement grew up between the young Queen and her husband. Matters became worse when the Queen refused to take part in the Coronation ceremony, which Charles had decided should take place before the opening of Parliament. The King could not appreciate his wife's religious aversion to taking part in a Protestant ceremony, and it was with a heart full of bitter feelings against the French nation that he had to decide to be crowned alone.

The quarrel with Henrietta Maria threw Charles more and more into the arms of 'Steenie', whom he now loved with a passion rare in one whose nature was reputed to be so austere. The ceremony of the coronation, coming just before the opening of another Parliament, served to demonstrate afresh to the nation that the Duke of Buckingham would be supported whole-heartedly by the King in all his actions — wise or foolish. The ancient office of Lord High Constable was revived and conferred on Buckingham for the Coronation Day only, and he took up his position on the King's right hand. Charles had chosen to be robed in white instead of the usual royal purple, a symbol, it has been said, of the innocence of his tragic martyrdom.

The ceremony was to take place in Westminster Hall, a high stage and throne being erected at one end. For what



CHARLES I OF ENGLAND

From the portrait by Daniel Mytens in the National Portrait
Gallery

By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

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followed, let us listen to the story of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, who was a spectator on this memorable day: 'I saw the Duke, Lord Constable for this day, taking the right hand of him (Charles) going up the stairs, and putting forth his left hand to heave up the King; he, putting it by with his right hand, helped up the Duke and, with a smiling countenance, told him: "I have as much need to help you, as you to assist me." I dare say he meant it plainly, yet searching brains might pick much from it.

'Upon a table placed on the left hand of the estate, were the regalia laid: which the Duke upon his knee bringing to the King, he delivered them to several noblemen . . .'

So the procession made its way under a canopy to the Church, the Knights of the Bath in their rich robes preceding, followed by the King's serjeants, the Masters of the Requests, the Judges, the Peers, the Carriers of the Regalia, and lastly his Majesty King Charles, who was presented to his waiting people by the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the following words: 'My masters and friends, I am here to present unto you your King, King Charles, to whom the crown of his ancestors and predecessors is now devolved by lineal right and he himself come hither to be settled in that throne which God and his birth have appointed for him, and therefore I desire you by your general acclamation to testify your consent and willingness thereto.' The fact that a general shout of 'God save King Charles' did not follow this point was, in all probability, not due to any unpopularity of the King — as some writers have sought to establish — but rather, as D'Ewes declares, to a variety of emotions in the audience. Some expected the Archbishop to speak at greater length, others were perhaps stupefied into silence 'at the presence of so dear a King'. At all events, when Lord Arundel told them they should cry out 'God Save King Charles', there was,

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according to D'Ewes, 'a little shouting'.¹ Yet Charles received loyal cheers and acclamations wherever he appeared during the rest of the day. As yet, the country was more disposed to blame the Duke of Buckingham for the recent disasters than its young King, who had that day stood before them in all the glory of his early manhood, nobility and enthusiasm clearly shown in his handsome countenance, with his white robes a pledge of the purity of his intentions.

Yet even at this moment Charles was allowing his personal irritation to lead him to throw away the very thing for which Buckingham had risked so much — the French alliance. Could Charles at this moment have forgotten his animosity to his Queen, and endeavoured to meet Richelieu's sagacious attempts to promote a friendly union between the two nations, he might have had at least one concrete result of all his past diplomacy with which to confront Parliament. It was no part of the Cardinal's policy to provoke the English to an open war, and on January 28th he was able to assure the English Ambassadors that the English ships lent to France would shortly be returned, and the French would lend practical assistance though nominally remaining neutral, to the English cause in the continental war. The French Government was also ready to meet the demands of the Huguenots, so that by the end of January the prospects of a French reconciliation and alliance seemed rosy.

Charles, however, seemed unable to meet the French offers in the spirit in which they were made, observing to Conway that in the agreement France was willing to offer, there must be some excellent warrants and reservations provided that were not expressed. A later letter revealed

¹ The description of the coronation is taken from the letter of D'Ewes to Stuteville, Feb. 3rd, 1626, ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, pp. 216-18.

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the fact that in the matter of the Huguenots Charles would be content with nothing short of the position of absolute mediator between the French King and his Protestant subjects, whilst the foreign war was to be carried on in exact accordance with his own designs. The dispatches he thought fit to send to France at this period show a determination not to meet the foreigner half-way, but to dictate to him unconditionally upon the future line of action. This obstinacy was not shared by Buckingham, who would have preferred to pocket his pride and accept the aid France now offered. None the less, when Parliament met it was certain that the Duke, not Charles, would have to shoulder the blame for the growing estrangement between the two nations.

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THE second Parliament of Charles at Westminster, which was to make itself famous by its attack upon his friend and trusted minister, had its official opening on February 6th, 1626. The King's mood was soured and distracted at the outset by a particularly annoying incident, serving to embitter still further his feelings towards France. Anxious to separate his wife from her French retinue, Charles had told her that she must view the procession to Parliament from the Countess of Buckingham's balcony. But when the time arrived, Henrietta Maria had not taken up her required position, and to the King's commands that she should obey him, she offered the most spirited resistance. Further reflection, and the advice of Blainville to yield on this occasion, apparently shook her resolution, and when Buckingham arrived to remonstrate with her, at the King's command, he found her ready to take his hand and be led across to his mother's balcony. But the Queen had, none the less, bitterly resented the King's action in sending Buckingham to her as messenger, whilst the Duke himself, speaking afterwards to a Venetian, could not but comment on this peculiarly unfortunate episode, whereby, through no fault of his own, he had incurred further dislike from the Queen. 'I would rather have lost every drop of blood', he declared, 'than that this should have happened.'¹ Nor was Buckingham the only one to suffer by the incident. Next day Blainville was forbidden the English Court, since Charles blamed him for most of the recent trouble

¹ Pesaro to the Doge, Feb. 20th, 1626, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1626-27), p. 329.

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with the Queen, and the prospects of Anglo-French amity seemed more remote than ever.

It was, therefore, with every prospect of a French war in the offing, that Charles met this new Parliament. He was in no mood for lengthy parley, and his opening speech assured the members that he was no orator and desired to be known by his actions, not words. They had been called together, it must be understood, to grant supplies and not to criticize his policy. Having stated his attitude, Charles would probably see nothing untoward in his entire omission of all explanation as to his past or future line of policy. He no doubt expected that, having silenced the factious members of the previous Parliament, this one would follow him in a burst of unquestioning loyalty. The Commons quickly indicated that they would do no such thing. An inquiry was to precede any vote of supplies.

At first there was nothing personal in their attitude, and Buckingham's name was tacitly omitted from all discussions during this first week of the session. A contemporary writes: 'I hear of a speech also made that week somewhat eagerly, aiming at, but not naming, the Duke of Buckingham: but it was not applauded, nor seemingly liked, by the House. Some thought because unseasonable'.¹ The Commons were in no hurry to start trouble, but it was clear that in their present temper there would be no grant of money without some substantial inquiry into the administration which had resulted in such depressing failures. And such an inquiry inevitably pointed to the Duke of Buckingham, since he who had undertaken all things, must necessarily assume the responsibility for all things.

The attack upon Buckingham, when it came, was likely to be all the more severe in that men still retained much of

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 221.

their old superstitious reverence for the Kingship and the theory that the King can do no wrong. Had Charles been willing to deliver his friend up to the Parliament men as scapegoat, they, in turn, would no doubt have shown their appreciation by granting him the supplies he required. But the King was soon to demonstrate that his character was capable of no such degree of treachery. He would stand by Buckingham to the end, affirming again and again that those who attacked his friend attacked their monarch. The principle at stake, although perhaps only dimly — if at all — perceived by the combatants, was that of ministerial responsibility.

Oddly enough, the Commons found their mouthpiece in one whom Buckingham had had no reason to regard as other than his friend, one who had not many months ago declared himself the Duke's 'humble creature' and desirous of devoting himself to the contemplation of his patron's excellence.¹ This was Sir John Eliot, promoted through Buckingham's influence to the rank of Vice-Admiral of Devon, a man whose position had given him unrivalled opportunities of observing the miseries of the recent disastrous expeditions.

At first, Eliot made no personal attack upon Buckingham, no doubt deterred by the warmth of the friendship which had so long existed between them. On February 10th he stood up merely to desire that inquiries into past disasters should precede present supplies, and that some account of the money granted since 1624 be given. With fine rhetoric he sketched the course of the recent failures: 'Our honour is ruined, our ships are sunk, our men perished: not by the sword, not by the enemy, not by chance, but by those we trust.'² There was no mention of any minister by name, but Eliot had clearly stated the

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1625-26, p. 5. ² FORSTER, *Sir John Eliot*, I, p. 486.

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attitude of the Commons; there would be no grant of supplies until a committee had met to inquire into past disasters and to consider the wisest course for the future. Without realizing it, this Devon squire was leading one of the most momentous revolutions in our history, for never before had it been an accepted axiom that the King, or his ministers, were responsible to Parliament for their conduct. Neither Henry VIII nor Elizabeth had willingly allowed Parliament to pry into their management of foreign affairs, and rated sharply any members who attempted to do so. But messages couched in the imperious terms of Elizabeth's were of no avail in the present conditions, and when, on March 10th, Weston was charged to deliver to the Commons the command that they were to vote supplies and ask no questions, the House deeply resented the insult.

At this critical moment, the words which all were aching to say and dared not, found their utterance from the lips of a man of no particular note — a certain Dr. Turner. He voiced the common gossip of the day when he accused 'that great man, the Duke of Buckingham', of being the cause of all the trouble, and demanded that certain burning questions should be answered.¹ Was it not upon the Lord Admiral that the blame for the recent naval failure at Cadiz should be laid? Had not the immense and exorbitant gifts bestowed upon the Duke led to the impoverishment of the realm? Did not the evil government of the nation proceed from the multiplicity of offices which Buckingham so inadequately filled, and from the incapability of those he had raised to positions of trust? Why, even the recent increase in recusancy could be traced to the fact that the Duke's mother and father-in-law were noted Papists! And was not the sale of offices and places of judicature, of

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 217.

ecclesiastical benefices and promotions, which had become a crying scandal in this realm, directly due to the Duke?

Turner was merely voicing popular rumour, and had no proofs to substantiate his charges, but in the debate which followed the House resolved: 'That Common Fame is a good ground of proceeding for this House, either by inquiry, or presenting the complaint (if the House finds cause) to the King or the Lords.'¹ Here was the House of Commons, ironically enough, turning upon Buckingham the very weapon with which he himself had supplied it. The right of impeachment, which he had so foolishly resurrected in the hey-day of his popularity, was now to be exercised against him.

As soon as the King heard of the Commons' resolution, he sent them an imperious message which might have quelled a less desperate assembly. 'This, His Majesty saith, is such an example as he can by no means suffer, though it were to take inquiry of one of the meanest of his servants, much less against one so near to himself, and doth wonder at the foolish impudency of any man that can think he should be drawn, out of any end, to offer such a sacrifice, much unworthy of the greatness of a King and the master of such a servant.'² The King had clearly indicated that he had no intention of throwing his minister overboard and was narrowing down the attack upon Buckingham to an attack upon his own regal authority. But once Parliament had taken the bit between its teeth, it was not going to be easy to check the attack, which was now proceeding further than even Eliot had desired.

On the Monday following Turner's outburst Sir William Walter had moved the resolution in the House, 'That the cause of all the grievances was, that (according as was said of Louis XI of France) "all the King's council rides upon

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 217.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 218.

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one horse".¹ He proposed that Parliament should advise the King, as Jethro did Moses, regarding the qualities he ought to seek in his advisers, always remembering that Moses chose elders, not young men. In effect, Parliament was beginning to attack nothing less than the authority of the Crown. Perceiving the trend of the recent speeches, and anxious not to precipitate too disastrous a struggle, Sir John Eliot now proceeded to do his best to assure the King of the House's inherent loyalty. The recalcitrant members were ordered to explain away their words, and the Commons declared that they did not wish to prevent the King from carrying on the war, but they claimed the right to investigate his wants and propose their own remedies.

To this overture the King speedily replied, and on March 15th the Commons were summoned to Whitehall to hear their answer from Charles's own lips. 'I will tell you,' he began, 'I will be as willing to hear your grievances as my predecessors have been, so that you will apply yourselves to redress grievances and not to look after grievances.' Then, proceeding to the question which touched him most deeply, he continued plainly, 'I must let you know that I will not allow any of my servants to be questioned amongst you, much less such as are of eminent place and near unto me. The old question was: "What shall be done to the man whom the King will honour?" but now it hath been the labour of some to seek what may be done against him whom the King thinks fit to honour. I see you aim specially at the Duke of Buckingham. I wonder what hath so altered your affections towards him. I do well remember that in the last Parliament in my father's time, when he was instrument to break the treaties, all of you did so much honour and respect him that all the honour conferred on

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 219.

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him was too little, and what he hath done since to alter and change your minds, I wot not: but can assure you he hath not meddled or done anything concerning the public or commonwealth but by special directions and appointment, and as my servant, and is so far from gaining or improving his estate thereby that I verily think he hath rather impaired the same.' In conclusion Charles hoped that Turner would be brought to account for his outburst against the Duke, and declared that in all other respects he was always ready to meet the Commons in their grievances.¹ The unfortunate Turner had already been thrust by illness into the obscurity from whence he had arisen, but his words were not so easily to be forgotten.

March 27th was appointed for a consideration of the whole subject in the House of Commons, and this time Sir John Eliot definitely threw himself into the attack upon Buckingham. How, he asked, could the subject wish to give money for the conduct of such disastrous affairs as those undertaken 'by that great Lord, the Duke of Buckingham'? Had not the Cadiz expedition been miserably bungled? What harm to our reputation had accrued from Count Mansfeld's miserable venture! And was it not a fact that at home honours and judicial places were sold and re-sold until the whole administration had become a scandal?

By the expedient of quoting historical precedent Eliot proceeded to point the way to future procedure in the granting of supplies. During Henry III's reign there was a certain Hubert de Burgh, 'a favourite never to be paralleled but now, having been the only minion both to the King then living, and to his father which was dead'. De Burgh was removed from office, and supply, refused before, was at once granted. Similarly, in the time of Richard II, 'because of exceptions made against De La

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, pp. 216-17.

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Pole, the Earl of Suffolk, minion of that time, of whom it was said that he misadvised the King, misemployed his treasures, and introverted his revenues, the supply demanded was refused, until, upon the petition of the Commons, he was removed both from his offices and the court.¹ These were unfortunate analogies, for Charles was well aware that the downfall of Hubert de Burgh had been succeeded by the rebellion of Simon de Montfort, whilst De La Pole's ruin was followed by the revolution placing Henry IV on the throne. It seemed clear enough to him that now, as then, the throne was again threatened!

So the next day the King sent a message to the Commons to attend him upon the morrow at nine o'clock in the Hall at Whitehall. Here Charles informed them that he had come to show them their errors and to rebuke them for 'their unparliamentary proceedings in Parliament'. To the Lord Keeper he delegated the task of telling them where they were at fault. They were cautioned to observe 'the difference between counsel and controlling, between liberty and the abuse of liberty'. The recent attacks upon the Duke of Buckingham were made in a complete ignorance of that nobleman's real character and conduct. 'His Majesty doth better know than any man living the sincerity of the Duke's proceedings: with what cautions of weight and direction he hath been guided in his public employments from His Majesty and his blessed Father: what enemies he hath procured at home and abroad: what peril of his person and hazard of his estate he ran into for the service of His Majesty and his ever blessed Father, and how forward he hath been in the service of this House many times since his return from Spain. And therefore His Majesty cannot believe that the aim is at the Duke of Buckingham, but findeth that these proceedings do directly

¹ FORSTER, *Sir John Eliot*, I, p. 522.

wound the honour and judgement of himself and his father. It is therefore His Majesty's express and final commandment that you cease this unparliamentary inquisition.' In conclusion the King himself addressed to them the ominous words: 'Remember that Parliaments altogether are in my power for their calling, sitting and dissolution.'¹

In view of the crisis which affairs had reached, and fearing the veiled threat of dissolution, the Commons proceeded to turn the House into a Grand Committee, ordering all doors to be locked, no members to go out and no other business to be transacted until this affair were settled.

In the meantime Charles announced his decision that the House should meet in conference to hear from the Duke's own lips his vindication of his conduct. The audience was to be held in the Painted Chamber, a room splendidly gilded, with magnificent frescoes, which would form a perfect background for the Duke's brilliant and handsome personality. But the Commons were in no mood to appreciate beauty, either of person or environment, and it was in a grim mood that they presented themselves to hear what their young leader had to say.

Once again Buckingham's speech rings with sincerity and an ardent desire to win over the Commons.² Its appealing phrases contrast strongly with the more coldly uncompromising speech which the King had just delivered. After explaining away Charles's threat of a dissolution and announcing the royal intention of forming a committee to consider the state of the realm, Buckingham spoke of his own intentions to serve his master and keep a good understanding between King and People. 'For my part,' he stated, 'I wish my heart and actions were known to

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, pp. 220-25.

² The speech is printed in RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, pp. 227-32.

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you all: then I assure myself you would reassume me to your good opinions.' The charge that he was willing to countenance Papacy, nay, even to turn Roman Catholic, after the fashion of his mother, he refuted by referring them to the occasions in Spain when tempting offers were made to him, would he but consent to be converted, all of which he refused. 'If I would have converted myself I might have had the Infanta to put in my master's bed.' Apparently Buckingham honestly felt that he had acted according to good counsel in the recent disastrous undertakings. Unfortunately for him, the partisan nature of the War Council had rendered its support negligible in the opinions of the Houses. Let us listen for a moment to the Duke's own opinion of the responsibility for the miserable failure at Cadiz:

'I was most careful to advise the King to have his Council with him, being to enter War with an active King. I did diligently wait upon the Council, left all recreations, all personal occasions, studying to serve my master and gain the good opinion of both Houses. The Council of Woodstock generally advised the going out of the fleet: and though it were objected that the season were not fit, yet the action showed the contrary, for they all arrived in safety. And for what was also objected, that the provision was not good, experience tells you the contrary, for the preparations were all good in quality and proportion.'

Sir John Eliot, who had seen the miserable, half-starved, wholly untrained crews set out in their badly patched ships, must have seethed with indignation at this last statement. Perhaps, since the Duke was away at the time the expedition started, and had not had time to give the preparations his undivided attention, he honestly believed these preparations to have been better than they were. This is giving him the benefit of the doubt. For had he read any of the numerous

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letters from the Plymouth Commissioners, he must have known that the expedition was far from well equipped. With regard to the subsequent failure, he now urged that he was not present in person, the King having required his services in the Low Countries, although he had made the greatest suit possible to His Majesty to allow him to accompany the expedition. This consideration the Commons were more disposed to use as an indictment against him than as a point in his favour.

He proceeded to acquaint them with particulars of the alliances he had formed when in the Netherlands, and touched upon his hopes of forming a league with France, even at this eleventh hour. With regard to his personal administration of his offices he gave them a few figures which definitely proved his efficiency in this direction. Far from making money out of the exchequer, he showed them how he had repeatedly drawn upon his private income for the payment of many of his expenses. This we know to have been true, for the Duke continually displayed his readiness to pledge his private fortunes in the cause he was pursuing, as during the embassy at the Hague. There is no evidence that he was guilty of the monstrous speculation of which Eliot accused him.

Clearly and simply Buckingham proceeded to marshal his facts in answer to the other charges made against him:

‘I am accused by Common Fame to be the cause of the loss of the Narrow Seas, and the damage there sustained. All that I can say is this, since the war began with Spain I have always had twelve ships on the coast and allowance but for four, the rest my own care supplied. And for the office of Admiral when I came first to it, I found the Navy weak, not neglected by my noble predecessor (for I cannot speak of him but with honour), but through the not paying of monies in time, there were such defects his care could not

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prevent: that if the war had then broke out there would have been found few ships and those unserviceable.' All this is true enough. The long years of peace which England had recently experienced had reduced the Navy to a negligible factor, there was virtually no standing army, and any attempt to go to war must have failed without intensive preparation and training spread over a considerable period. Buckingham can hardly be blamed for pre-existing conditions, but he should have recognized that, with the nation in its present state of unpreparedness, war was quite impossible. His self-vindication continued:

'I was first persuaded to take this office (Lord Admiral) by the persuasion of Sir Robert Mansell, and though I objected I was young and inexperienced yet he said that by my favour with my master I might do more good in procuring payment for that charge. I desired my master to grant a Commission, as it were, over me. I have found a great debt, the ships defective and few in number, the yearly charge of £54,000 per annum which was brought to £30,000. We built every year two ships and when so many were built as were requisite, we brought it to £22,000 per annum, which comes not to my hand but goes into its proper streams and issues from the officers to that purpose deputed.'

In conclusion he made a direct appeal to the Houses, hoping that they would support his cause now that he had explained it fully and, he trusted, to their satisfaction. His confidence was still unshaken, he had faith in the ultimate success of his designs. He felt that their attacks had proceeded from misunderstanding of his objects, and was willing to forget all personal rancour: 'If any of you have blamed me, I do not blame him but think he hath done well, but when you know the truth and when all this shall appear I hope I shall stand right in your opinions. Gentle-

men, it is no time to pick quarrels with one another: we have enemies enough already, and therefore it is the more necessary to be well united at home.'

After this magnificent appeal to their emotions, Secretary Conway rose to substantiate the Duke's statement that he had always proceeded by counsel, whereupon Buckingham again stood up — this time to reveal the full story of the ships under Pennington, which had been used against La Rochelle. He declared that in this matter he had 'proceeded with art' to try and avert the surrender of the ships, and that everything had turned out to the advantage of the Huguenots, 'For the King of France thereby breaking his word, gave just occasion for my master to intercede a peace for them, which is obtained, and our ships are coming home.'

There is no record of the immediate effect this lengthy harangue produced upon the Commons, but since they proceeded with their charges against Buckingham quite unperturbedly, it must be assumed that they simply discredited his whole story as a pack of lies. If he had 'proceeded artfully' with the King of France, according to his own telling, who was to know that he was not doing the same with them? So on April 4th they presented to Charles a Remonstrance vindicating their right to call to account the highest subjects, if they were enemies to the realm. With the adjournment for the Easter recess Charles had a slight breathing space.

To add to the present troubles, the King had proceeded quite unnecessarily to throw away the friendship of France. The original dispute respecting the seizure of French ships as prizes of war had been allowed to assume altogether exaggerated proportions, and since England persisted in seizing and retaining French ships which she claimed were carrying contraband goods, the French were obliged to retaliate. This might have been amicably settled, had not

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Charles displayed a stubborn determination to provoke the French Government. On March 28th the English Ambassadors Holland and Carleton were ordered to leave Paris, since Charles had suspicions that Louis meant to attack his Protestant subjects in La Rochelle. Slowly all prospects of any alliance between the two powers departed, despite Richelieu's efforts to heal the breach. By April 30th the Cardinal had finally decided to reverse his line of policy, definitely throwing the English alliance overboard. War with France loomed in the offing.

Rumours of all this trouble with France, considerably embellished and distorted, reached the Commons, who had reassembled on April 13th. The responsibility was laid to the account of the Duke, as a matter of course. By now, had London gone up in flames, Buckingham would have been accused of incendiarism. The charges against him were being piled up daily by the Commons, and all men knew that an impeachment before the Lords was impending.

To make matters worse for the Duke, a more powerful opponent had appeared against him in the Upper House, and one who did not have to base his accusations upon common fame. Charles had not made his peace with the Earl of Bristol upon his accession to the throne, and during the whole reign this nobleman had been a virtual prisoner in his house at Sherborne, being told to abstain from presenting himself at the first Parliament of the reign until the King had leisure to peruse the charges against him.

In January Bristol, weary of his long confinement, requested Charles to grant him permission to be present at the Coronation ceremony, and received in reply a letter of sharp reproof. 'We cannot but wonder,' wrote Charles, 'that you should make such a request to us out of favour: as if you stood even capable of it: when you know what your behaviour in Spain deserved of us, which you are to

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examine by the observations we made, how at our first coming into Spain, taking upon you to be so wise as to foresee our intentions to change our religion, you were so far from dissuading us that you offered your service and secrecy to concur in it, and in many other open conferences pressing to show how convenient it was for us to be a Roman Catholic, it being impossible in your opinion to do any great action otherwise; the wrong, disadvantage, and disservice you did to the treaty, to the right and interest of our dear brother, sister and their children. The great estimation you made of that state and the vile price you set this kingdom at. Lastly, your approving of the condition that our nephew should be brought up in the Emperor's court.¹

These were charges which any honourable statesman would prefer to meet openly, but Bristol was deprived of his chance to appeal to the Lords by receiving no writ of summons to the Parliament which met on February 6th. He protested, demanded a writ, and was curtly informed by Conway 'That the King was no ways satisfied, and therefore must propound unto him, whether he would rather sit still and enjoy the benefit of the late King's pardon, or waive it and put himself upon trial for his negotiation in Spain'. Bristol replied that he had already been questioned upon twenty articles by a Commission of the Lords, and had given full satisfaction, that he would neither waive James's pardon nor one whit of his privilege of being called to the present session. Still receiving no writ, he petitioned the Lords 'That he, being a peer of the realm, had not received a summons to Parliament, and desires their Lordships to mediate with His Majesty that he may enjoy the liberty of a subject and the privilege of his peerage.'² So the writ was dispatched to him, along with a

¹ CABALA, p. 185.

² This correspondence is printed in the Preface to the Earl of Bristol's Defence *Camden Miscellany*, vol. vi.

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letter from the Lord Keeper, telling him quite clearly, in the name of the King, that he had better forbear attendance.

Bristol chose to disregard the letter, and on the authority of the writ he had received came up to London and presented himself before the Lords, declaring that for two years he had been kept a prisoner simply because Buckingham was afraid of him. He was now prepared to lay an accusation against the Duke, based upon the evidence of the proceedings in Spain.

To save his favourite from open accusation in the Lords, Charles used the only card left to him — he directed the Attorney-General to accuse Bristol of high treason, and on May 1st the Earl was brought before the bar to listen to the charges. The fight was growing desperate. Before the Attorney-General could proceed with his accusation, Bristol made a dramatic appeal to the Peers: 'My Lords,' his voice rang out in clear and strong accents, 'I am a freeman, and a peer of the realm unattainted. Somewhat I have to say of high consequence for His Majesty's service, and therefore I beseech your Lordships give me leave to speak.' Leave was granted. Then amidst a breathless hush Bristol pointed his finger boldly at the great Duke of Buckingham, and, with a voice full of contempt, declared: 'Then, my Lords, I accuse that man, the Duke of Buckingham, of high treason and I will prove it.'¹

The situation was without any precedent. Here was a peer, a freeman, unattainted as he himself declared, yet already accused by His Majesty of treason, offering a charge of deep moment against the highest of the King's ministers. Never had the Lords been in a like dilemma, and to save their authority and yet not offend their King, it was decided that the two charges should proceed simultaneously, the Attorney-General having precedence.

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 99.

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Londoners seethed with excitement as the news of what was taking place reached them. During this memorable first week of May the Duke of Buckingham came to Parliament with an unwontedly shabby equipage, 'My Lord Duke came to the House in an old coach, some three footmen, and no attendance'. In strange contrast, the Earl of Bristol was strikingly gay, for he appeared at Westminster 'with eight horses, his own horse brave and rich with cloth of gold and tissue'.¹ It is most likely that Buckingham was anxious not to arouse popular resentment by his usual display, and felt that a show of poverty would best serve his cause in the present crisis. It was universally affirmed that the King would support Buckingham to the end, not stopping at a dissolution should matters reach too dangerous a height, and Bristol's life was popularly adjudged to hang upon a very slight thread.

On the appointed day there was a breathless gathering in the Upper House to hear the Attorney-General read the King's charges against the Earl of Bristol. The attempt to change Charles's religion was, naturally, the main accusation, together with a statement that Bristol had concealed the fact that the Spaniards were not in earnest over their promises, and had thereby compelled Charles to have to journey to Madrid, at great personal risk, to find out the truth for himself. Furthermore, the Earl had doubted one of Buckingham's statements in his relation to the Parliament of 1624, which the King had affirmed to be true. Bristol had thus indirectly given His Majesty the lie. Such charges were patently forced, and did not weigh in the balance nearly so heavily as those which Bristol proceeded to advance against Buckingham.

Boldly Bristol now brought forth his accusations against the Duke, although he must have known that his temerity

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 224.

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might easily cost him his head. The principal charge was that Buckingham had plotted with Gondomar, as early as 1622, to take the Prince into Spain, with the avowed intent of changing his religion, which amounted to treason of the most dangerous kind. In Spain his actions had led the Spaniards to entertain hopes of his conversion. He had attended Roman Catholic services, and openly bowed the knee before the altar. Furthermore, his obnoxious behaviour in Spain had finally broken up the negotiations altogether.¹

Charles and Buckingham must have trembled at the speeches of the intrepid Earl, for they knew that it lay in his power to hand over much private correspondence which would hardly help their cause in the present dilemma. So Charles dramatically interrupted the proceedings, declaring that Bristol spoke out of the depth of his hatred for Buckingham, and that he himself would be a witness to testify that all the evidence he had brought forward was false. But the investigation proceeded, and Bristol even went so far as to obtain Pembroke's support to the statement that Buckingham, out of fear, had proposed to have him sent to the Tower on his return from Spain.

Frantically Charles interfered again. He was fighting desperately to save Buckingham, and incidentally himself, for his own authority lay in jeopardy during these fateful days of May. This time he contested the legality of counsel being allowed to Bristol upon such a charge.

Calmly the Peers proceeded to debate upon the two messages they had received from the King during the conduct of the trial. Slowly the idea of the infallibility of the monarch was fading from the minds of Englishmen. The King's messages were treated at their face value. With

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, pp. 249-62; ELSING, *Notes of Debates in the House of Lords* (1624-26), ed. Gardiner, pp. 157-61.

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regard to the first, the Lords strongly doubted the propriety of His Majesty's giving evidence in the trial of a subject, whilst they had precedents to prove that Bristol was quite legally entitled to counsel.¹

Charles saw that he was losing, and it is doubtful to what new steps he would have been driven to save his friend had not interruption come from a most unexpected quarter. A deputation from the Commons had arrived at the Upper House with their carefully prepared charges against Buckingham, and requested that a conference should meet immediately and proceed with the impeachment. So the smaller trial was automatically stopped for the greater, and Parliament proceeded to the impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham.

On the afternoon of May 8th, a committee of eight selected members of the House of Commons, each with two assistants, presented themselves before the Lords to prefer their charges. Contrary to the usual custom, Buckingham took up his habitual place amongst the Peers, sitting directly opposite his accusers, and showing his contempt for their attack by laughing contemptuously in their faces during the whole proceedings. Glanville delivered the opening speech, in highly fanciful metaphor, comparing the Parliament to the Universe, the Upper House to the Stars, the Commons to the Lower World, the King to the Sun: the stars, he declared, received light from the sun, the House of Commons from them: but alas, the firmament was become dim and the stars sent but little light, by reason of a great blazing comet, which kept the light of the sun from them. It was not difficult to guess the identity of the comet, and the Duke, apparently, displayed such open derision at this effusion that Glanville was obliged to halt in his further reading of the charge to expostulate with him: 'My Lord,

¹ ELSING's *Notes of Debates in the House of Lords* (1624-26), pp. 176-85.

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do you jeer at me? Are these things to be jeered at? My Lord, I can show you when a man of greater blood than your Lordship, as high in place and power, and as deep in the favour of the King as you, hath been hanged for as small a crime as the least of these articles contains.¹

A more significant speech was made by Digges, who, all unwittingly, proceeded to challenge nothing less than the royal sovereignty: 'The laws of England,' he declared, 'have taught us that Kings cannot command ill or unlawful things. And whatsoever ill events succeed, the executioners of such designs must answer for them.'² The King's servants were to be responsible to Parliament, and so indirectly the King himself. Repeatedly had Charles informed the Houses that Buckingham had done nothing which he himself had, if not commanded, at least sanctioned. It was in vain that they, in turn, declared they were protecting Charles against a servant who had betrayed his trust. Charles regarded Buckingham's actions as his own, and for these he believed himself responsible to God alone. What the King approved was well done, and it behoved no subject to question it. The monarch was above all law, and answerable to no Parliament for his conduct. The Commons, apparently, could not — or would not — see this aspect of the question. Whilst they were in reality calling Charles's authority into question, they constantly declared that they were protecting that authority.

As will be realized, it was difficult for the Commons to know how to formulate their charges, since so many of Buckingham's actions dovetailed into those of the King, and against the King they must be careful to make no open attack. So on many points they were obliged to be silent. In all, they had drawn up thirteen articles of impeachment

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 226.

² RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 306.

which were now to be brought forward by the various members who were managing the affair. Edward Herbert opened the charge by advancing the accusation that the Duke, 'being young and inexperienced, had, with exorbitant ambition and for his own advantage, procured and ingrossed into his own hands several great offices'. He had bribed the Earl of Nottingham with £3000, and an annuity of £1000 to surrender to him the office of Lord High Admiral. Similarly, he had proceeded to compound with Lord Zouch for the surrender of his office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, paying him £1000 and an annuity of £500. Selden then arose, and accused Buckingham of having neglected the guarding of the seas, and broken his trust as Lord Admiral. He also charged him with having given the order for the seizure of the *St. Peter* of Havre de Grace, which he had taken as a prize of war, no doubt to swell his own revenues. Glanville proceeded with a further charge that the Duke, during James's reign, had enforced his royal master to extort from the East India Company £10,000 to release certain of their ships which he had stopped from proceeding on their intended voyage. Also about the end of July last, the said Duke as Lord Admiral had, 'by indirect and subtle means and practices', procured one of the principal ships of his Majesty's Navy called *The Vanguard* to be put into the hands of the French King. And that, furthermore, he had known and abetted the French intention to use these ships against the Huguenots of La Rochelle.

This comprised eight of the articles, to all of which Buckingham had listened with a slight smile of superiority upon his handsome face. He knew enough of the secret working of these affairs to which the Parliament men had referred to realize that his acts were too intimately bound up with those of the late and the present King to lay him open

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to any serious indictment. When the time arrived, he would be able to stand calmly before his accusers, and point out their error in each one of the charges they had preferred.

The remaining five articles of impeachment were read on May 10th and this time Buckingham was not present. Sherland accused the Duke of having, during James's reign, sold the office of Lord Treasurer to Lord Mandeville and that of Master of the Wards to Middlesex for £20,000 and £6000 respectively. Pym affirmed 'that he had procured divers titles of honours to his mother, brothers, kindred and allies of small estate, to the prejudice of the nobility and damage of the crown'. Furthermore, he had obtained from the King grants of divers manors, part of the Duchy of Lancaster, and of other lands belonging to the crown. He had also received enormous sums of money for his own private use, to the great diminution of the royal revenues.

To Wandesford was left the last charge, which had been added as an afterthought, and needed very careful handling. Buckingham had administered medicine to the late King, but it was no part of the Commons' programme to bring trouble upon themselves by directly accusing him of poisoning James. For might not such a charge reflect upon Charles? So the popular talk of poison was tacitly omitted, and it was merely objected 'that the said Duke, without any sufficient warrant, did unduly cause and procure certain plaisters and a certain drink or potion to be given to his late Majesty, after which divers ill symptoms did appear upon his said Majesty.'¹

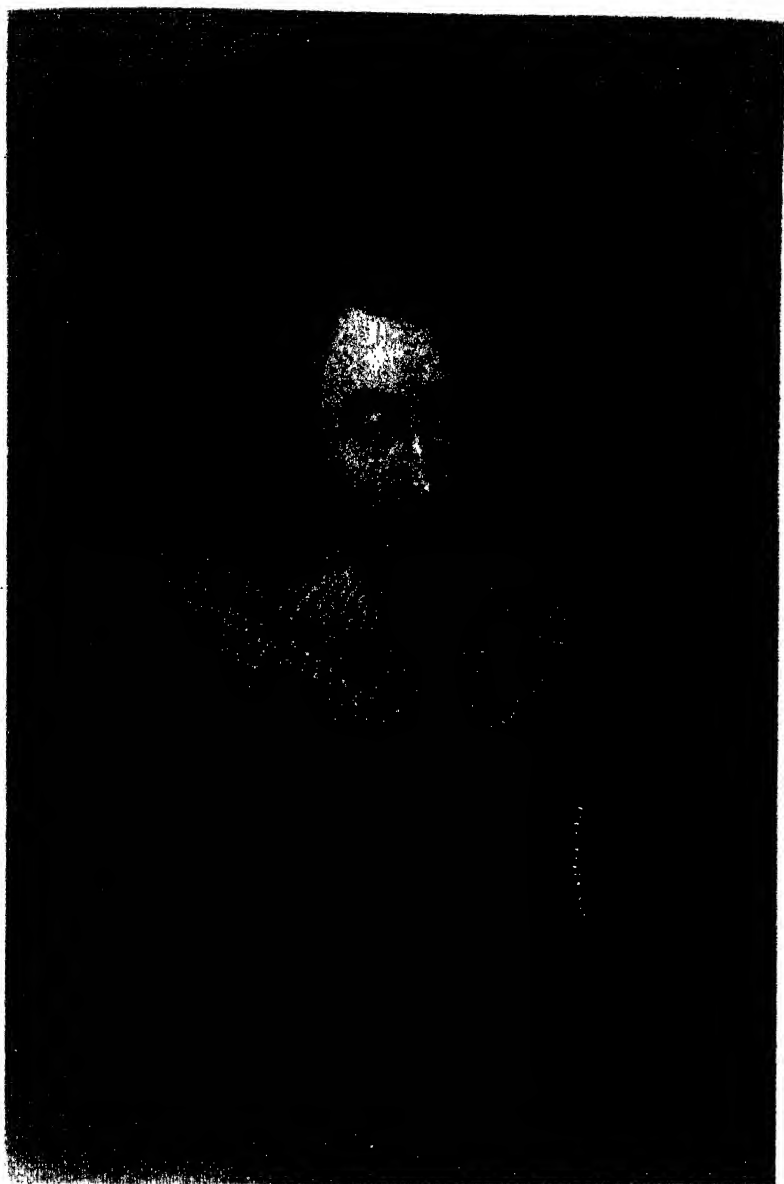
This concluded the thirteen articles of impeachment,

¹ The account of the Impeachment is taken from *Lords' Journals*, III, pp. 619-624; RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, pp. 306-53; Documents illustrating the Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham, ed. GARDINER, *Camden Society Pub.*, New Series, vol. 45.

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which had painted the Duke as an obnoxious, self-seeking, arrogant monster, anxious only to pursue his personal aggrandisement at the expense of both his country and his sovereign. The Commons, believing honestly in every one of the charges, and bewildered in their attempts to save their beloved country, only imagined that they were acting for the best in thus essaying Buckingham's removal from the government. Charles, having the deepest affection for his friend, and the highest possible opinion of his wisdom, was rapidly becoming more enraged with his 'faithful Commons' who, he considered, were doing all in their power to wound him. The Duke himself seemed the least perturbed of all men. He had laughed at the accusations, and, on the whole, seemed to treat them lightly. The charge of poisoning James — as it virtually was — was the only one which really enraged him, and rightly so, for the man who could poison his benefactor would be vile indeed. It is now generally admitted that there is no evidence that Buckingham poisoned the King. He died from natural causes, no doubt hastened by excessive indulgence in rich fruits and wines. In any case, Buckingham's frank and impetuous nature was not the stuff of which poisoners are made.

It only remained to sum up the evidence against the Duke, and this was left to Sir John Eliot, whose gift of mighty rhetoric was best suited for such a task. This famous speech established Eliot's claim to oratorical fame and left as false an impression of the man he attacked as can be imagined. Allowing his fine imagination to run away with him, Eliot launched a violent attack upon his erstwhile patron and boyhood companion. 'The inward character of the Duke's mind,' he cried out to the excited assembly, 'is full of collusion and deceit. I can express it no better than by the beast, called by the ancients



SIR JOHN ELIOT

From an engraving by W. Holl, from the original at Port Eliot

Photo: Mansell

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Stellionatus, a beast so blurred, so spotted, so full of foul lines that they knew not what to make of it.' Unfortunately the picture which Eliot now proceeded to paint was almost as mythical as the beast to which he referred. In highly coloured rhetoric, he attacked Buckingham's conduct. He had seized all power into his own hands by 'raising and preferring to honours and commands those of his own alliance, the creatures of his kindred and affection', and furthermore, 'by emptying the veins the blood should run in he had cast the body of the kingdom into a high consumption'. How had he used the vast treasures which poured into his coffers? No need to seek far — 'it is too visible. His profuse expenses, his superfluous feasts, his magnificent buildings, his riots, his excesses, — what are they but the visible evidences of an express exhausting of the state, a chronicle of the immensity of his waste of the revenues of the Crown?' With regard to his administration of medicine to James, Eliot had even more to say. 'Not satisfied with the wrongs of honour, with the prejudice of religion, with the abuse of the state, with the misappropriation of revenues, his attempts go higher, even to the person of his sovereign'. He was treading on dangerous ground, and well might declare that what this inferred he hardly dare think, let alone speak.

The speech would hardly be complete without an apt comparison, but where in history could one find such a one? To Eliot the Duke most closely resembled Sejanus, who was described by Tacitus as '*audax, sui obtegens, in alios criminator, juxta adulatio et superbia*'. All these qualities, he declared, were to be found in the Duke. He was bold beyond comparison, secret in his designs, a slanderer of others, whilst his flattery and pride were such as had seldom been seen. But even further did Eliot proceed to push the parallel. In the name of Sejanus he attacked the

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Duke in language which otherwise he would never have dared to formulate.¹

His burning rhetoric had expressed to the full the violent indignation which the country had gradually come to hold against Buckingham. It would be vain to deny that much of what he had said was true. The government of the nation, under the sway of the favourite, had become a scandal. It was well known that any rise to power was impossible without gaining the Duke's favour, a most intolerable method of approach to high place. Buckingham's vanity and incompetence led him to entertain jealousy and fear of those who displayed real ability and independent views. This is probably the explanation of his persistent rebuffs to the overtures of Sir Thomas Wentworth who, during these early years of Charles' reign, had indicated, on more than one occasion, a readiness to serve his King in the cause of good government. Wentworth had no personal rancour against the favourite, and whilst not agreeing with his policy and deprecating his foolish excesses, recognized the futility of wasting time in an attack on the King's friend. Yet his efforts to come to some understanding with Buckingham were received in no friendly spirit, and he had been debarred from seeking election to the present Parliament. Even Charles had shown astonishment on seeing his name in the list of sheriffs. 'Wentworth is an honest gentleman', he remarked, but left it at that. Buckingham's will was law, and those whom he feared must be silenced. So men of high talent were excluded from power, and their places taken by Buckingham's creatures, whose sycophancy had gained them his favour. Not only did Buckingham himself hold an unwarranted plurality of offices, but by this means he

¹ The speech is printed in RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, pp. 353-56; and in FORSTER, *Sir John Eliot*, I, pp. 541-52.

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indirectly controlled every high post. It was vain for him to assert — as later in his defence — that many of the positions he held were non-lucrative. What he had seized was far greater than money. In his hands he held the virtual control of national affairs.

In all fairness to him, it must be remembered that he had a very genuine belief that his own plans were for the good of the nation, and those of the opposition the highway to its destruction. And in such beliefs, he was strongly supported by the King. So that, even towards the end, when this tremendous burden of responsibility was wearying him beyond all measure, he continued to bear it staunchly, convinced that he alone could work the salvation of the country. It was vanity, no doubt, but a type of vanity in which there was something admirable. Buckingham had that will to succeed which might, in happier days, have brought him success. But he wielded his authority in times when England and her age-long institutions were in the melting pot, and few there were who dare have prophesied what would be the outcome of the strange new ideas fermenting in men's minds. With more inherent virtue, perhaps, than any other English King, Charles was to end on the scaffold. Neither he nor Buckingham recognized that the time had passed when one man could force his will upon a rebellious England. That nation which had merely murmured at the scoldings of Elizabeth, was ready to explode with wrath at a word from Charles or his friend.

In such days it was necessary to tread carefully, but Buckingham apparently could not, or would not, see this. By his own foolish display, he had laid himself open to the serious charge of peculation which Eliot had advanced against him. That it was unjustifiable enough now seems highly probable, but Sir John had been led astray by

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outward shows. He was forced to view Buckingham's excesses and profuse waste of public funds in times when the realm cried out in poverty, and expeditions failed miserably from the most deplorable lack of money. To the man who had seen misery and confusion in the streets and dockyards at Plymouth, the tales of the Lord Admiral's latest banquet — often reaching a figure as high as £600 — must have been nauseating. We can imagine that, as he had witnessed, during the past few years, the expenditure of such enormous sums as £22,000 for one estate, and as much again for the mere improvement of another, £10,000 for a collection of pictures, or a similar amount for a single piece which took the extravagant Duke's fancy, the inward ferment in the mind of one who was, whatever his faults, a keen patriot, must have become intolerable. It seemed to him that all this money might have been better applied, and no doubt he was right. On the other hand, Eliot and many others were wrong in supposing that vast sums — which we know now were applied by Buckingham to public purposes — had been appropriated by him for his own personal use.¹ Neither can we forget that on innumerable occasions Buckingham had shown himself willing to spend his fortunes freely upon national enterprises.

There is no denying that the favourite had received excessive grants of money from the Crown in times when any available surplus could more profitably have been devoted to national purposes. A contemporary noticed, during his rise to power, that gifts and honours were poured upon him by a doting King 'liker main showers than

¹ In his defence Buckingham revealed that the £20,000 supposed to have been given to him by Lord Mandeville, upon his being made Lord Treasurer, never came into his hands at all, but was paid to Porter 'by the late King's appointment, to be disposed of as His Majesty should direct'. The whole of the money was paid out to others, and Buckingham never had a penny of it. In the same way, the £6,000 he was said to have received for procuring the Mastership of the Wards for Middlesex, was in reality bestowed by James upon Sir Henry Mildmay, the Duke having no share of it. See Buckingham's Defence, *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 656.

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sprinkling drops or dews'.¹ But if Buckingham were at fault in accepting these grants, then the King must have been equally guilty. There is no adequate reason for supposing that Buckingham's large income was ever anything but freely given to him by both James and Charles. The very grave charge of peculation which Eliot had advanced against the Duke was supported by no sufficient evidence.

The country as a whole, however, would give ear readily to any accusation against Buckingham, the more violent the better. No doubt Eliot himself had been carried away to some extent by the popular antipathy to the favourite. It is inevitable that around such a great and magnificent figure a certain amount of legend should have gathered. Trivial stories always excite men's imagination and passion, and Buckingham's unpopularity must have been increased a thousandfold by such tales as that which told how, when in Paris in 1625, he went about shedding diamonds which he was too proud to pick up. This fantastic rumour most likely had its only grain of truth in the more probable story that one evening, purely by accident, the Duke lost a diamond from his famous white velvet suit, and was fortunate enough to recover it next morning.² Similarly, his magnificent banquets and splendid entertainments, lavish and extravagant though they certainly were, had none the less been unduly magnified by scandal-mongers into riotous orgies and iniquitous excesses. Taking into consideration the vast number of duties performed by Buckingham — however inadequately — we are left to wonder in amazement when he ever found time for the inordinate self-indulgence attributed to him. Nor is it likely that Charles, with his high ethics and lofty philosophy,

¹ WOTTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Misc.*, v, p. 309.

² *Ibid.*, p. 314.

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would have taken to his heart a foul monster after the type of Eliot's 'Stellionatus'.

All that Eliot had said about Buckingham was in effect only a half truth. He saw things in black and white. His was not the mentality even to attempt the understanding of such an enigma as Buckingham's character. A calmer judgment might have paused to weigh up the strangely inconsistent qualities which existed side by side in the favourite's baffling personality. That nature which seemed to Eliot so mean and selfish could at times show itself capable of great sacrifice and unselfish devotion. Along with the desire for fine clothes, jewels, ostentatious artistic collections, and extravagantly furnished mansions, Buckingham often evinced an amazing disregard for money as such. He who was supposed to have amassed enormous stores of wealth by the impoverishment of the realm, left at his death a widow and children in circumstances which could hardly be described as affluent. The one whom Eliot denounced as a traitor to the nation, seeking only his own personal aggrandisement at the expense of King and Country, showed unmistakably, on countless occasions, the most sincere — if misplaced — enthusiasm for the glory of Great Britain abroad, and a supreme readiness to spend his life in her service. This noble enthusiasm was, no doubt, nullified by his enormous vanity — that vanity which saw no wisdom in the views of others — but it was unmarred by treachery. Proud, vain, intolerant — Buckingham was all these, but never treacherous. To his country he was an industrious, if consistently unsuccessful servant, and to his King a most devoted friend.

Eliot's reference to Sejanus in the closing sentences of his speech had been, to say the least, unfortunate. Charles, burning with indignation at this bitter attack upon the minister in whose innocence he had the most perfect faith,

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declared bitterly 'If the Duke is Sejanus then I must be Tiberius'.¹ To the Lords he stated that he himself would give evidence which would clear Buckingham of each of the charges so maliciously brought against him. 'He that toucheth any of you,' he informed the Peers, 'toucheth me in very great measure. I have thought fit to take order for the punishment of some insolent speeches lately spoken. I have been too remiss before'.² He declared that he would silence the whole affair, now and for ever, had not Buckingham desired him to allow the trial to continue, that he might prove his innocence.

Whilst the King was speaking in the House of Lords a tremendous commotion was taking place in the Commons. When the members had taken up their places, it was noted that two of their number — Eliot and Digges — were absent. Investigations revealed that they had been sent to the Tower, and as soon as this was made known to the House, there were loud cries of 'Rise, Rise, Rise', which Pym, 'not well understanding' tried to quell. The assembly broke up in much discontent, and there were speculations as to whether it would sit again were the two members not released.

The Lords had petitioned the King that the Duke should be kept under restraint until this business was ended, but far from agreeing to that, Charles allowed his friend to accompany him to the House on that Thursday morning when he went to address the Peers. The friendship between them seemed to have been strengthened by the recent events, and few there were who dared have attempted to foretell what the future might hold. The nation was grievously disturbed and trembled upon the verge of disaster. 'Lord help us,' wrote a contemporary, 'what will

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 101.

² RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 357.

³ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 227.

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come of these things? The distraction is great, and of great consequence and, unless God show us the way out we are but in ill case. *Domine miserere!*'¹ In the midst of all this parliamentary tumult the news had arrived that Mansfeld's army had been completely annihilated by a force of 30,000 strong under the dreaded Wallenstein. The whole Protestant cause on the Continent seemed lost.

In the meantime, Charles had informed the Commons that he would make them know he was their King, and with this cryptic utterance left them, accompanied by the Duke. 'It is generally thought that the last Parliament of King Charles his reign will end this week,' says a contemporary. 'Is it not time to pray?'²

Heedless of their danger, the Commons proceeded to draw up a long vindication of their liberties to be presented to Charles, and declined to engage in any further discussions until the two members were released. Eliot and Digges were thereupon submitted to close examination for the words they had spoken, but the Peers themselves could find nothing treasonable in their speeches, so that Charles was reluctantly obliged to release them. Meanwhile, the tide in favour of the Earl of Bristol was running strong in the Upper House, whose members daily ranged themselves more definitely in opposition to the King.

The fateful month of May was now drawing to its close. It was to be marked by yet one more event of paramount importance. On Sunday, the 28th, at about two o'clock in the morning, Lord Suffolk, the Chancellor of Cambridge University, died, leaving this office vacant. As soon as he heard the news, Charles saw immediately what a unique opportunity this afforded him of demonstrating publicly his continued trust in Buckingham. 'I would Buckingham were Chancellor', he exclaimed, and forthwith a messenger

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 227. ² *Ibid.*, p. 228.

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was dispatched by the Bishop of London, intimating to the University the King's pleasure that they should choose the Duke as their new Chancellor. To the High Churchmen at this ancient seat of learning the King's behest was a great joy, but the Puritan element openly rebelled at the idea, whilst the more moderate considered it, in view of the circumstances, an indiscreet action. They objected 'that instead of the patronage we sought for, we should bring lasting scandal and draw a general contempt and hatred upon the University, as men of the most prostitute flattery; that it would not be safe for us to engage ourselves in public affairs'.¹

The Puritans chose to advance the Earl of Berkshire, son of the late Chancellor, to rival Buckingham, and the resultant election in the Duke's favour was as close as 108 votes to 103. On June 1st Charles realized his wish, and the Duke of Buckingham was triumphantly declared Chancellor of Cambridge University.

The Commons were furious at this open flaunting of their recent petition against the advancement of the Duke to so many high offices. They openly expostulated with the University, declaring that it had committed an act of rebellion, and even went so far as to send letters commanding certain professors to come up to London and answer for their conduct. But at this point Charles intervened, and commanded them not to stir in this business of the University, which belonged not to them, but to himself.

Buckingham sent the University a most gracious letter, appreciating the great honour they had done him, which had satisfied an ambition he had long entertained to be well thought of by men of learning. He was also 'as apprehensive of the time they had shown their affections in, as of the honour they had done him'. To return their

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 229.

loyalty he only hoped they would be able to suggest some way which should 'make posterity remember you had a thankful Chancellor and one that really loved you and your University'.¹

On June 8th Buckingham laid before the House of Lords his answer to the charges preferred against him. This defence displays evidence of a remarkably careful preparation, and the Duke was able to show that in all his actions he had been supported either by the past or the present King. The lavish grants which James had forced upon him reflected as much upon the donor as the receiver. In the questionable proceedings respecting the surrender of the *Vanguard* and the other ships to France, or the seizure and retention of the *St. Peter*, Buckingham was able to show that he had merely obeyed orders. James had laboured for the grant from the East India Company much more diligently than Buckingham, and the Duke could produce the King's own letters to prove this. The charge of poisoning was so absurd that he saw in it nothing which would not even assist his cause by proving that his accusers were actuated by personal animosity. His self-confidence was in no whit abated by what had just passed: 'Who accuses me?' he proudly demanded of the Peers. 'Common Fame. Who gave me to your Lordships? The House of Commons. The one is too subtle a body, if a body: the other too great for me to contest with. Yet I am confident neither the one nor the other shall be found my enemy when my cause comes to be tried.'²

But his words made little impression upon the Commons who proceeded to debate stormily upon the recent events. For a whole day they continued to sit without a break, arguing as to whether they should draw up a Remonstrance against Buckingham to be presented to the King, before

¹ CABALA, p. 119.

² *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 662.

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there could be any question of a vote of supplies. A few members were in favour of sweetening the pill by a preliminary grant of money, but, knowing Charles, the majority decided in favour of taking a firm stand. On June 13th the King was requested to remove his obnoxious minister from his Council — 'For we protest before your Majesty and the whole world that until this great person be removed from intermeddling with the great affairs of state, we are out of hope of any good success: and do fear that any money we shall or can give, will, through his misemployment, be turned rather to the hurt and prejudice of this your Kingdom than otherwise, as by lamentable experience we have found in those supplies formerly and lately given.'¹

Charles's mind was quickly made up. He would not abandon his minister, who had never acted without his sanction, to this rebellious assembly. Through Buckingham the Crown itself was threatened, and so to save his friend — and, incidentally, himself — Charles declared on Thursday, June 15th, that this Parliament was dissolved. The impeachment was automatically stopped, and to clear the Duke's name it was decided to proceed nominally with the charges before the Star Chamber. That night the Earl of Bristol was conveyed to the Tower, and it was generally apprehended that a few other bold spirits might follow him there.

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 405.

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WITH Parliament dissolved in an angry mood, with no subsidies granted or likely to be granted, Charles and Buckingham might well have pondered very carefully over the difficult situation which confronted them. Even as sanguine a nature as the Duke's must have realized the utter hopelessness of the position in which the English Government now found itself. Abroad, it was the by-word of Europe, for Charles's uncle, Christian of Denmark, had engaged himself in a war, trusting to the English promise of assistance, and now found himself utterly abandoned. True, Charles pleaded that this was not his fault — where could he raise the money which he had promised through Buckingham, at the Hague? Vainly he offered his jewels: no merchant could be induced to buy them, despite their undoubted value. Meanwhile, Christian's army was being subjected to sharp reverses from Tilly's forces, whilst the men commanded by Mansfeld and Bethlen Gabor had a much worse foe in Wallenstein, whose well-trained armies were beginning to sweep all before them. The Protestant cause on the Continent seemed doomed, and it was natural that Charles should be blamed, although his failure to send money was only a small part of the real reasons for the present disasters.

At home, the story of the next few months is one of endless attempts to raise money without the aid of Parliament. If Charles had ever thought of the recent Parliament as a small faction opposed to the general feeling of the nation,

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he was to be quickly undeceived. There was no loyal flocking to the royal banner upon his appeal for free gifts, but rather on all sides a deep distrust of the King's intentions. Commissions under the Privy Seal could, of course, be issued to enforce subsidies, but these had hitherto met with little success. Both Charles and Buckingham began to practise rigid economy in their private expenditure. The Royal Household was informed that from July 7th, 1626, all tables at court were to be put down and the courtiers placed on board wages. The King also proposed to save £60,000 a year by revoking certain pensions he had granted in better times. Yet it was all in vain; never had he been so short of money, and never had he needed it so badly.

Sailors from the recent expeditions, who had not been paid, actually came up to London on August 17th, and clamoured around the Duke's coach, threatening his person unless they received their wages. Buckingham, promising them an interview in the afternoon, managed to evade them by escaping in a boat along the Thames on this occasion, but it was only a temporary shelving of the issue. Again and again were these bodies of mutinous sailors to be seen roaming the streets of the capital, searching for the naval headquarters or the Duke's residence. At the beginning of December a company of three hundred sailors battered open the door of Sir William Russell, the Treasurer of the Navy, and refused to disperse until beaten back by pikes and muskets.

Distress in the army and navy had led to insolence in the ranks. Peaceful citizens were daily subjected to alarm from the bodies of soldiers who wandered about the country side, whilst many vagabonds, in the name of soldiers, committed outrages and thefts. The only remedy was martial law, and a provost-marshal was appointed in every shire. But the people regarded martial law with almost greater

alarm than the rape and pillage of the undisciplined soldiers.

To a dispassionate observer it must appear that things had come to such a pass as to render only one sensible course of action open to Charles. He had far better desert his allies in Europe altogether than lead them to disaster by raising false hopes of support which he could not possibly satisfy. At this point he should have withdrawn England from the foreign war, dismissed the useless mariners and soldiers who were rapidly constituting themselves a menace to the peace of the realm, and with the help of an able council devoted himself to internal reforms. Unfortunately, neither Charles nor Buckingham had the capacity of recognizing the point at which they were virtually beaten. Buckingham was always confident that the tide would turn in his favour at the critical moment, and so pursued his schemes gaily, whilst Charles cared little whether it turned or not, once his mind was made up. He had by now settled down to the fixed idea that he was right and his opponents wrong, and that his cause, in the divine nature of things, was bound to be ultimately triumphant.

So, with a shockingly mismanaged war with Spain already to his account, Charles now proceeded to allow his personal animosity to drag the nation into a war with France, which might with skilful diplomacy have been averted. Richelieu had no desire for a quarrel with England, but he was, after all, a Frenchman and a Roman Catholic, and Charles's repeated attempts to interfere in national affairs on behalf of the Huguenots succeeded in the end in alienating him. His master was already enraged with the English King for private reasons, and it seemed a hopeless task to pour oil on these troubled waters. But on September 27th, 1626, the courtly and diplomatic Frenchman, Bassompierre, arrived in London to essay this very task.

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The position with which he had to deal was by no means promising. Two months ago the King's anger with his wife had burst its bounds. On Monday, the last day of July, Charles had entered his wife's apartments at about three o'clock in the afternoon, and was much annoyed to find a hilarious scene proceeding, the Queen laughing and her French attendants 'dancing and curvetting' in her presence. Charles's annoyance sprang, not from any inherent objection to frivolity, but from the fact that, when in his company, Henrietta Maria persisted in maintaining a sullen and injured air of martyrdom. So he took her by the hand, and led her to his own room, locking the door after him to shut out her French followers. Later Conway was ordered to inform the members of the Queen's household that they were required to leave the Kingdom. They protested vigorously, the women howling and lamenting 'as if they had been going to execution'. The apartments were cleared by the calling in of the Yeomen of the Guard. When the Queen heard of what had happened 'she grew very impatient and brake the glass windows with her fist'. Apparently Charles managed to appease her rage, and later she accompanied him to Nonesuch where, we are told, they were 'very jocund together'.¹

Meanwhile, the French courtiers refused to leave Somerset House, and as soon as he heard of this Charles's fury was so great that he seized his pen and dashed off a most strongly worded letter to Buckingham. 'I command you,' he wrote, 'to send all the French away to-morrow out of the town. If ye can, by fair means, otherwise force them away, driving them away like so many wild beasts until ye have shipped them, and so the devil go with them.'² Although Charles had certainly had much to endure from his wife's French attendants for more than a year past,

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 237.

² *Ibid.*, p. 244.

this was an arbitrary action to which he had been driven. The story which the expelled courtiers would have to tell would certainly do much to foment the indignation of the French King.

None the less, the sound counsel which Marshal Bassompierre now proceeded to give Henrietta Maria could have done much to bridge the breach which seemed to be impending. He advised the Queen to do her best to conform with English ways and to receive the English courtiers cheerfully, since to remain a stranger in a strange land was to court unhappiness. Whilst he could see Charles's point of view with regard to the trouble fomented between him and his wife by the French attendants, he did not hesitate to inform the King that their dismissal was, in effect, a violation of the marriage contract. He suggested a compromise in the matter; that the Queen should retain a few French servants, but that the bulk of her household should be English.

With regard to the disputes over the ships, Bassompierre was ready to agree to some treaty, whereby the whole quarrel could be settled to the mutual satisfaction of both nations. It was not his fault that events were to take place which alienated all parties and rendered such a compromise impossible.

So far had the French Ambassador gained the confidence of Charles and his friend, that on November 5th we find Buckingham giving one of his famous entertainments at York House in his honour. A masque performed on this occasion was made the medium of conveying renewed hopes of perfect amity between the two crowns. Mary de Medici was shown, enthroned, in the midst of several deities, upon the sea dividing England and France, welcoming Frederick and Elizabeth of the Palatinate, together with her three daughters and their respective spouses —

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Charles I of England, Philip IV of Spain, and the Prince of Piedmont.

It was a magnificent vision, and all Buckingham's old self assurance began to come back to him as he discussed future plans with the French Ambassador. Money had again begun to pour into the royal coffers, for so far there had been little resistance to that brilliant scheme which had been suggested to Charles of raising money by means of a forced loan. The shires around London had, for the most part, paid up without much trouble, and as the Commissioners were dispatched to the more distant counties Charles's prospects seemed rosy.

It had been intended to send Goring to France as ambassador, but in view of the renewed prospects of amity, Buckingham felt that he himself was the only person in England to whom such a delicate piece of diplomacy might be entrusted. This in spite of the unpopularity his quick temper and amorous diversion with Anne of Austria had won him during his last visit. Of course, there were not wanting those who hinted that his desire to re-visit France was influenced by a longing to see Anne once more, but this is very doubtful. The affair with that lady does not seem to have gone very deep, and was most probably by now merely a pleasant — or unpleasant — memory to the Duke.

Bassompierre doubted whether the impetuous young Englishman would be very welcome at the French court, whilst it is said that Buckingham's wife, sister and mother all besought him upon their knees not to hazard his person in such a dangerous venture. A large section of Frenchmen blamed the Duke for the estrangement which had grown up between Charles and his wife, affirming that Buckingham was afraid that the Queen might usurp his place in the King's affections. There may have been a certain

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amount of truth in this, for the relations between Buckingham and the Queen had, on more than one occasion, been decidedly strained. It is said that when, on her first arrival in England, Henrietta Maria had refused to have his wife and sister as her personal attendants, the Duke — usually the essence of courtesy towards the ladies — so far forgot himself as to threaten the Queen, haughtily reminding her that English Queens had lost their heads before to-day. He sent a messenger to the French Ambassadors to protest against the exclusion of his relatives from the Queen's retinue, and apparently this servant displayed such insolence that the Ambassadors threatened to throw him out of the window. Indeed, it seemed to an independent observer at the English Court, that Charles and Buckingham 'were doing everything to tire out the French and induce them to go'.¹ On the other hand, Buckingham may have been sincere when he declared wearily to the Venetian Ambassador that these quarrels with the Queen were not of his seeking, but that he was being forced into his present line of action by Charles, whose anger with the French grew daily stronger. The Duke could even find it in his heart to praise Henrietta Maria, whose gay and carefree disposition, so like his own, must — in other circumstances — have attracted him strongly.

But there were few at the French Court who would have given him the benefit of the doubt, whilst the story was rapidly spreading abroad that, should he finally decide to visit France, his position might be dangerous enough, in view of a 'mysterious secret jealousy'² which the French King bore towards him. The reason was not far to seek. At any rate, what would have happened had Buckingham gone to France at this point will never be known, for

¹ Pesaro to the Doge, July 31st, 1625, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1623-25), p. 129.

² Pesaro to the Doge, Nov. 21st, 1625, *Ibid.* (1623-25), p. 221.

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events took a turn which rendered a diplomatic embassy, to say the least, superfluous.

The seizure of English ships by the French, as a measure of reprisal, had gone on steadily throughout the recent discussions. English vessels had been taken at Rouen and La Rochelle. The final death blow to all hopes of a reconciliation was dealt by the Duc d'Epemon, one of the leading French nobles, who hated Richelieu and his negotiations, and saw his opportunity to create a final breach between him and Charles. A fleet of two hundred English and Scottish vessels, carrying a whole year's supply of wine, was sailing from Bordeaux, and, waiting until the duty had been paid, he proceeded to seize the lot — thereby acquiring money, wine and ships. The price of wine immediately soared in England, the whole wine drinking community was violently irritated, and December 3rd saw the issue of an Order in Council for the seizure of all French ships and goods in English waters.

Although he was wavering in his desire for the French alliance, and had plainly told Contarini that 'by their hostile acts the French demanded war rather than negotiation',¹ Buckingham could not yet abandon the idea of a personal visit to France, hoping to bridge the impending gulf. So one night in mid-December, the Duke departed for Canterbury, where he was to meet Bassompierre, whom he had recalled from Dover in view of the present crisis. As he left London the crowd recognized him, and it was 'with curses and horrible deprecations' wishing him to 'begone for ever'² ringing in his ears that he made his way to the Cathedral city. Bassompierre, with his usual tact, managed to restrain the Duke's impatience to visit France, knowing well enough that his advent at that Court would be more than unwelcome.

¹ Contarini to the Doge, Dec. 18th, 1626, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1626-28), p. 59. ² *Ibid.*

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The fitful ray of sunshine which had begun to peep through the clouds of the King's troubles was destined to be short lived. The forced loan was suddenly declared by the judges to be without any legal sanction, and in spite of Charles's instant dismissal of the Chief Justice, Sir Randal Crew, and the appointment of Sir Nicholas Hyde, one of Buckingham's creatures, to the vacancy, the example set by the legal fraternity had its effect upon the nation.

Of course, for the most part, those possessed of no heroic spirit preferred to pay up rather than face the dreadful punishments which so frequently attended nonpayment. It was no light matter to be torn from a peaceful agricultural life and sent off to take part in the gruesome battle on the Continent. Nor was it pleasant to be confined perhaps in some distant country miles away from one's own people. None the less, there were a few valiant spirits who asserted the liberties of Englishmen by refusing to pay money for which there was no legal ground of claim. Generally the men who so refused occupied positions of importance. On some occasions the Commissioners for the Loan themselves declined to pay, whilst a large number of the peers proved recalcitrant. Strong opposition, as may be imagined, was given by such men as Wentworth, Eliot, Pym, and Hampden who, in addition to their objections to lending money so illegally claimed, had forceful views upon the purposes for which it was to be employed. Before the end of June, 1627, Sir Thomas Wentworth had been summoned before the Council for his refusal to pay the loan, and banished to Kent — far from his ancestral seat of Wentworth-Woodhouse in Yorkshire. The growing body of discontent was assuming alarming proportions, and it was an increasing anxiety to the King to know what to do. He did not wish to provoke further opposition by unduly harsh measures, and yet to accept payment from the weak

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and let the strong go scot-free was a confession of weakness he well knew to be fatal. So the story goes on throughout these early months of 1627 with weary regularity. Squire after squire is hauled before the Council for his refusal to pay, and either banished to some remote county or sent to serve in the foreign wars. But Englishmen were fighting for their liberties, and punishment was no deterrent.

The March of 1627 saw money again pouring into the King's coffers — but not from his loyal subjects! Pennington, who seems to have been another Drake, had made a magnificent attack upon the French shipping between Calais and Bordeaux. He had swept the Channel triumphantly, bringing home with him enough money from the capture of French prizes to pay the way for a while, at any rate.

Money was urgently needed, for open war with France could now no longer be averted. In January the mutual umbrage and distrust between the two nations had caused the breakdown of all Bassompierre's diplomacy. Louis had demanded nothing short of the fulfilment of the actual marriage contract, whilst with regard to the prize ships he awaited England's action first. Richelieu, it appears, wished at this point to enter into negotiations with Buckingham, and if possible to prevent war. But Louis was quite adamant in his refusal to entertain the Duke in Paris, and the proposed *rapprochement* was prevented. Instead, Buckingham had to convey to Richelieu the English King's terms, which were tantamount to a declaration of war — 'Je trouve que le roi mon maître ne croit pas être maintenant obligé à l'observation des deux traites, en ce qui touche les affaires de la maison de la reine ma maîtresse.'¹ In addition to this refutation of the terms of the marriage contract respecting the Queen's household, the Duke was

¹ CROWE, *History of France*, III, p. 551.

also directed to say that in the matter of the ships France, having been the aggressor, must take the first steps towards a pacification. Naturally, a proud government could not brook such a reply and all hopes of a reconciliation were at an end.

In such a situation the success of Pennington's preliminary piratic exploit was miraculous. It put new life into the King's drooping spirits and money into his pocket. Gaily Charles and Buckingham proceeded to expend these funds on warlike preparations. How long the money would last they hardly seem to have calculated. Perhaps they hoped for repetitions of Pennington's success to smooth the path for the future. And for the present, at any rate, it was enough that the men were paid, provisions provided, and goodly ships rigged out for a grand naval attack upon the growing power of France.

The one thought which seems to have troubled Buckingham was that Spain might lend her fleet to the assistance of the French, and by now he had learnt enough to know the dangers of having to fight both these powers at once. In an effort to make peace with Spain, Balthazar Gerbier, a painter and connoisseur was dispatched to Paris to meet Rubens, ostensibly to collect pictures for the Duke, but in reality to discuss with that artist, who had himself suggested the idea to Buckingham two years earlier, the prospects of a cessation of hostilities with Spain. The Spaniards, willing to treat separately with England, firmly refused to include Holland and Denmark in the agreement, and so the negotiations fell through. Charles would not desert his allies, and the expedition against France must sail with the prospects of Spanish attacks an uncertain quantity.

In itself the expedition upon which Buckingham now planned to embark had several good points. He had clearly recognized that naval supremacy was to be of para-

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mount importance to England as time advanced. To this end, Richelieu's ambitions of strengthening the French navy must be strangled at birth. Well directed, the exploit could have done much to strengthen England's position abroad. Furthermore, there was something humane in the desire of Charles and Buckingham to assist the Huguenots in their desperate struggle against the Roman Catholics. Of course, it had its roots in their wish to distract Louis, but nevertheless they must have been unconsciously stirred by the fervent enthusiasm many noble Englishmen were feeling for the defence of the Protestant cause. It was a praiseworthy object, no doubt, but one which called for the greatest skill in its achievement. Failure would only make the unfortunate lot of those they set out to assist infinitely worse. To engage them in a death struggle with their King were dangerous enough unless Buckingham was certain of his ability to see them through. And, knowing as he did the turbulent state of affairs at home, the emptiness of the exchequer, the condition of the army and navy, could Buckingham have felt reasonably sure of this ability? For him this expedition was a desperate throw of the dice, and he must have recognized it as such in his inner heart. But if such thoughts ever came to the surface he evidently choked them at birth. His dispatches display nothing but the most cheery optimism, which seems to have been shared by none but his royal master.

The four grand objects of the expedition are clearly set out in the instructions issued to Buckingham on June 19th, 1627. The Lord Admiral was to go in person in command so that there should be no repetition of the Cadiz disaster. The seas were to be swept of all French and Spanish vessels which might be wandering around, hoping to attack English commerce. This being done, certain regiments were to be taken to La Rochelle to aid the Huguenots, not in any

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rebellion against their King, but to assist them in the siege upon them which the English government knew was shortly to be commenced. Buckingham was to ask the Rochellese if they desired such assistance. If they answered in the negative, the soldiers were to be sent back to England, if in the affirmative, the English regiments were to be handed over to the command of Marshal Soubise. Buckingham, having completed these negotiations, must now proceed to recover the English ships detained at Bordeaux, after which a few vessels might be dispatched to the West Indies in search of Spanish treasure ships. The main business of the expedition seems, in this sea of instructions, to sink beneath the enormous task of securing the supremacy of England on the high seas.

For the present, the destination of the expedition was to be kept a complete secret. Buckingham realized the tactical importance of keeping the enemy in the dark, and to this end he communicated his designs to none but his private councillors. But it was well known that vigorous preparations were in process for some sort of an exploit, and naturally there were surmises on all hands as to its target. Ever since May the raising of soldiers by the rough methods of the press gang had been going on. On May 1st Sir George Blundell had to report to the Duke that two hundred of the pressed men who had arrived at Dover were 'such base rogues'¹ that he had sent one hundred and twenty of them back again. For the support of the rest, who had arrived from various counties, he had no money, and had been obliged to borrow upon his own credit. On all sides, the attempts to impress men to serve in the expedition were met by pleas of poverty, or dearth of able-bodied men, whilst the soldiers, once pressed, mutinied or ran away upon every possible occasion. On June 3rd Sir

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 159.

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John Burgh, the Duke's second-in-command, advised his master that he must see to the fitting out of supplies of shirts, shoes and stockings, and the provision of adequate numbers of arms. Moreover, so mutinous were the men generally that he feared commissions of martial law might be necessary to enforce order. This was discouraging material with which to start a great venture.

Already on May 16th, the Duke had given a magnificent farewell supper at York House, where both the King and Queen were present. A masque performed on this occasion was highly topical, though scarcely discreet. First the Duke came upon the stage, and following him were several open-mouthed dogs' heads, representing the barking of the people. Then came a character representing Envy, after which Truth triumphantly wound up the procession.

It was in a cheerful mood that Charles came to Portsmouth on June 11th to view the fleet. He boarded and inspected several vessels, afterwards going on board the Lord Admiral's ship — prematurely named the *Triumph* — where he dined, and spoke very merrily of the prospects of the expedition. The Duke followed him later, confidently telling his retinue what he would do to retrieve the bitterness of the loss at Cadiz. The general opinion was that he must needs do well, or the consequences none could foretell: 'The choicest and wellnigh all the most sufficient men for command in the kingdom, as well as the most skilful at sea, are to be employed in this service, so that if it should miscarry, many are afraid the loss will be almost irrecoverable.'¹ Before the departure the Duke addressed his men personally, in as loud a voice as he could, telling them to be of good courage, and that each soldier would have ample opportunity of displaying his prowess in battle. In every charge he promised that he himself would be the first into

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 223.

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danger. He could promise them much, but nothing that was to be gained without the shedding of blood. It was a gallant speech, from one who was soon to prove himself a gallant soldier.

At four o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, June 27th, one hundred vessels spread their white canvas to the winds, carrying to the aid of the French Protestants 6000 foot soldiers and 100 horse, many of them the flower of the English nobility. Their spirits were raised by the apparent cowardice the enemy displayed; not a French nor a Spanish vessel left its harbour to cross their path, and this glorious English Armada, led by Buckingham in the *Triumph*, made a superb progress to La Rochelle without a sight of the enemy. At home a poetaster of the day declared that this demonstrated the naval superiority of Charles over Edward III or even Elizabeth, and Neptune was made to say:

'I saw third Edward stain my flood
By Sluys with slaughtered Frenchmen's blood:
And from Eliza's fleet
I saw the vanquished Spaniards fly,
But 'twas a greater mastery,
No foe at all to meet;
When they, without their ruin or dispute,
Confess thy reign as sweet as absolute.'¹

¹ GARDINER, VI, p. 171 f.

ON THE ISLE OF RHÉ¹

OFF the western coast of France, guarding the entrance to the harbour of La Rochelle, stands the small island of Rhé. Recognizing its importance as a natural defence, the French had garrisoned the island strongly at two points — La Prée and St. Martin's. The latter fortification had only recently been erected, and offered a formidable resistance to the invader. These, together with the strongly guarded Fort Louis on the mainland, constituted a perfect defence for the town of La Rochelle, and the invader had no easy task.

On July 10th the Dutch captain, Cornelius Petersen, had just loaded his ship the *White Fortune* with a rich cargo of the salt in which the island abounded, when he perceived a number of tall ships nearing the coast. The evening was well advanced, but he could see that one of the ships showed the colours of His Majesty of Great Britain — the white flag and St. Andrew's Cross — in the main tops. It was the first detachment of the English fleet, led by the Lord Admiral's vessel, which now proceeded to cast anchor in the waters surrounding the island, as near as possible to the two fortified points of La Prée and St. Martin's. Next day, as the rest of the vessels came up, Buckingham gathered them into position, whilst preliminary efforts were made to assault La Prée. On July 12th, the fleet being collected, Buckingham held his first council of war, and it was decided that Sir William Becher

¹ I have adopted the old spelling. The modern form — Ré — was at this time just beginning to creep into use, and is occasionally encountered in the documents.

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and Marshal Soubise should go to Rochelle to discover the attitude of the inhabitants towards the proposed assistance.

Meanwhile, Buckingham decided to land his men upon the island, although the original design clearly intended that no proceedings should be taken until it were discovered whether the Rochellese were prepared to lend a friendly hand. But no doubt he appreciated to the full the tremendous value which the Isle of Rhé would be to the English Government could he manage to capture it. It was very rich in salt and wines, it would form a perfect base for piratical descents upon French and Spanish shipping, whilst from the island constant trouble could be fomented with the neighbouring Huguenots to distract the French Government. But, as he was to find to his sorrow, its fortresses were almost invincible to attack, whilst the stony nature of the soil rendered the making of effective earthworks practically impossible.

Obstacles like these did not daunt Buckingham, who now found himself cast in a role which threw to the fore unsuspected qualities in his nature. He was an extremely gallant soldier, displaying tremendous personal bravery, and during the very first day his spirit and intelligence became manifest to all. He endeavoured from the start to glean all the information that he could, and went about amongst his troops trying to infuse into them some of his own vigorous enthusiasm. The landing upon the island soon revealed of what poor stuff many of his men were made. On the order to advance, some of them took up their required positions, but several of the more half-hearted pressed men, who had no stomach for a fight, pretended not to hear the command and remained on board their ships. Others, even on reaching the water's edge, miserably refused to set foot on shore. The Duke himself was forced to go amongst these cowardly wretches,

with drawn sword, forcing them ashore, and then had to go back in person to the ships to fetch those who preferred the safety of their vessels to the dangers of warfare. It was an inauspicious beginning.

Taking advantage of their confusion, Toiras, the Governor of St. Martin's, who had occupied a position to prevent the landing, dispatched a troop of French cavalry to scatter them before they could draw themselves up into battle-line. The confusion which succeeded was deplorable, and many a brave English officer lost his life in the mad skirmish. As soon as he perceived what was taking place, Buckingham rushed back to the place of danger, and at great personal risk managed to form his men into some sort of a line. The French cavalry, outnumbered, withdrew, leaving large numbers of their men, many of them scions of the nobility, upon the field of battle.

The English force now commenced the march to St. Martin's, without taking the smaller fort of La Prée, for Buckingham feared that should they waste time assaulting this latter point, the main fort would then be forewarned and so strongly garrisoned that an attack would be hopeless. The Duke now proved that he was no mere drawing-room cavalier, but could endure the rigours of a long day's march as well as the most hardened veteran. From the beginning he tended his men with that concern which alone can bring success. He was no Mansfeld. It is said that on one occasion he even risked his life to save a poor soldier who was threatened by the rising tide. He allowed none of the usual horrors of mercenary warfare to take place in his troops. The bodies of his enemies he refused to sell for ransom money, but allowed them decent burial by their friends. For the wounded Frenchmen he cared to the best of his ability. Pillaging was prohibited, his men were forbidden to enter the villages, and hardness was

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encouraged. The Duke shared the lot of the common soldier, went amongst them with a smile and a greeting, and at night slept in the open fields to set them an example. We are irresistibly reminded of Shakespeare's hero:

For forth he goes and visits all his host,
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
And calls them brothers, friends and countrymen

That every wretch, pining and pale before,
Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks,
A largess universal like the sun
His liberal eye doth give to everyone,
Thawing cold fear.¹

All his men combined in praising the personal demeanour of their leader, and, had he possessed the necessary experience and good fortune, this expedition might easily have given to Buckingham that hero worship from the nation which he so ardently craved. But in military tactics he could not be other than a novice, this being his first engagement, whilst, despite his courage, his luck seemed always to be against him. For once, Fortune deserted her favourite. The necessary support, from one cause or another, never reached him at the critical moment.

That the expedition had been built upon shifting sands was soon to be revealed. The political intrigues which Buckingham had directed to be carried out in France did not bear their expected fruit. Becher and Soubise from the mainland soon reported that the Rochellese were very half-hearted in supporting their champion. A small handful of men was offered, but they firmly declined to do anything further without counsel.

This desertion was a sharp reverse, but Buckingham did

¹ *King Henry V*, Act IV, Prologue.

not feel that it was necessary to withdraw, as he was instructed to do in his orders. The citadel of St. Martin's was a tempting sight; he decided to take it, if force did not succeed, by famine. So the troops remained on the island, and the guns were landed and placed ready to storm the fortress. Buckingham quickly grasped the salient features of the situation. It was soon apparent that any attempt to storm the citadel must fail. 'This is a place of great strength,' he wrote to Conway, 'invincible if once perfected, and in this imperfect state of fortification it now stands in, so strong that the shortest way to take it is by famine. The ground it stands on is rocky, and of such a continued and hard kind of rock as the pick-axe will hardly fasten in it, which takes off all possibility of making mines, had we better engineers than we have in the army.'¹ His plan was now to barricade all avenues whereby succour might be sent to St. Martin's both by land and sea. To this end, four or five ships, well armed, watched by night close to the citadel, whilst the rest of the fleet kept guard in the waters surrounding the island. Also he intended to construct trenches around the citadel and so cut off all supplies from landwards. A troop of cavalry, under Lord Montjoy, was directed to beat up and down the island to cut off all straggling forces of the enemy. On July 27th he managed to capture thirty musketeers and some horses, sent out by the French to fetch water.

Buckingham did not underestimate the strength of his opponents. Their infantry and cavalry were well tried companies, they had great stores of provisions and ammunition, and a governor who would prefer death to the dishonour of surrender. Meanwhile, he had certain intelligence that the French Government was preparing expeditions for the relief of the citadel at Bordeaux, Brouage, Blavett, St.

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 27.

Malo and other places. These, if they arrived, would considerably divert the English forces. The Duke realized that it was going to be a long siege, and earnestly begged Conway to send reinforcements. Their need of ammunition, he declared, was most pressing and they lacked any good engineers. Additional troops, he hoped, would be already on their way, for he was in urgent need of succour.

Buckingham saw clearly that the assistance of the Huguenots would depend to a large extent upon his success. At present, whilst full of pious thanks for his assistance, they committed themselves in no direction, but, he told Conway, 'The main point of union, as I conceive, depends upon the success of this enterprise, which being once at an end a strong party will come in of itself, which is one of the many commodities that would be gained by this conquest.'¹

If personal effort could have brought him success in the siege, the citadel would have been his. His men were amazed at his infinite care, undaunted courage, patience and arduous effort in all the preparations. Even the enemy praised his affability, courage and generosity. He did not stay behind the lines, but went personally to view the proceedings at great risk. 'Himself views the ground', writes the Huguenot soldier, Henri de Vic, 'goes to the trenches, visits the batteries, observes where the shot doth light, and what effects it works upon the enemy: in a word, goes himself to places of the greatest danger, oftener than becomes a person of his rank.'² Apparently, though some of his officers worked well with him, a certain section did not give him that ready co-operation which is one of the main conditions of success. This would naturally make the Duke more anxious to see personally that everything was done, and so in addition to the main responsibility of the expedition he found himself burdened with numerous petty

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 30.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 24.

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details which might easily have been delegated to trustworthy subordinates.

Already the besiegers were suffering from lack of supplies. On July 20th Sir Allen Apsley wrote home from Rhé that there was no bread and beer thought of for the soldiers. Wine was no sustenance to the troops, and he besought the authorities to use all possible speed in sending out supplies of the necessary victuals for the men. Buckingham himself wrote home to his secretary, Nicholas, to procure as much of his own private income as he possibly could, and send it forthwith, to be employed for reinforcing them with men and munitions. To Conway he stated quite plainly in his letter of August 14th that 'without speedy supply we will lose all that we have gained'.¹ The enemy had been fortified by the arrival of a force of 6000 foot, 500 horse, and 40 cannon, under Monsieur d'Angoulême, within half a mile of La Rochelle, where he had taken up his position to prevent the English landing. There was some talk of his building a fort at that place, and already he had stopped provisions from entering the town. Driven by distress, the Rochellese had been forced to apply themselves to the Duke — but it was to ask for succour, not to offer assistance. He had, in addition to his own burdens, to advise them upon their defence, and furnish them with the necessary arms.

On the island itself, the British preparations for the siege were completed, and Buckingham had displayed considerable strategic ability in drawing up his men and ships to the best advantage. Despite the rocky ground, he had managed to construct trenches down to the water side, so that the enemy could not leave the citadel by land without having to pass the British redoubts. By sea, the ships had been placed in the form of a half moon, with the horns

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 39.

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encircling the citadel and the twenty French shallops which lay before it each night, strongly armed against a possible attack with muskets, pikes and fireworks. A floating boom around the landing place prevented ingress or egress from the citadel. Buckingham clearly realized that all depended upon his preventing supplies from reaching St. Martin's, and had the besiegers been strengthened by the victuals and reinforcements which the Duke had requested from home, and for which he looked anxiously every day, success might easily have been his.

The enemy had realized his plan, and instead of massing soldiers for an attack upon the British forces, they devoted their attentions to devising some means of supplying the citadel with food and provisions to enable it to hold out. A desperate crew of Angoulême's army had been selected to man some shallops which were preparing to pass on food and ammunition to the besieged.

In the citadel itself Toiras was devoting his efforts to entrenching himself as securely as possible within his hold and to a desperate endeavour to deprive the British forces of their leader, without whom he knew they would be lost. Buckingham, writing home despairingly about the needs of his soldiers, did not mention the enormous personal risks to which he was daily exposed, but De Vic wrote to Conway, telling him how the Duke had narrowly escaped assassination by a French soldier: 'Upon this day se'enight a fellow was taken, coming from the citadel, about whom (being searched) was found a chain bullet, and a little short kind of dagger, the blade of it about five or six inches long, very broad for that length, edged on both sides and those very keen and a wondrous sharp point.'¹ The unfortunate wretch confessed, when captured, that he had been commissioned by Toiras to kill the Duke, with

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 34.

promise of large rewards. Open attacks were also made from the citadel upon the British leader. De Vic reports, 'they make every day divers shots upon his lodging, and myself have been with his excellency when the shot hath come through the chamber over which he was'.¹ Meanwhile, assistance previously promised to Buckingham by the French aristocrats, Rohan, Soissons and Savoy, seemed likely to come to nothing. These noblemen were biding their time, seeking the best terms before they decided on which side to throw their weight.

During the rest of August the two forces on the island were playing a waiting game. The British had managed to pen in the enemy by land and sea, and knew that they were already in want, and could hardly hold out much longer unless reinforced. Every day deserters from the French army were captured, and sent back again to provide extra mouths to feed. But for the heavy rains which fell during the beginning of September, the enemy's main shortage — that of water — might have driven them to surrender. As it was, the English had constant intelligence during the first week of this month that it was daily becoming more impossible for those in the citadel to hold out. If Buckingham had received that support from home which he expected, it would have been possible to enforce surrender at this point. But by the nineteenth, news had begun to trickle into the British lines that the French were making strong preparations for the relief of the island, and that they intended to unite with Spain in an attack upon the English ships and compel them to raise the blockade. The English officers grew increasingly despondent as they heard these tidings and saw no signs of any reinforcements coming to them from their King. 'They now give themselves for men neglected and forgotten in England',² Buckingham wrote

¹ HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

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bitterly to Conway. The Rochellese, frightened by the rumours of the strong force gathering against them, were now willing to treat with Buckingham, but could give him little assistance and he, for his part, preferred to wait and see how the fortunes of war were likely to turn out before entering upon any new obligations.

The fears of the men that Charles had forgotten them were groundless, for the King was making desperate efforts to secure supplies for the troops. Apart from his difficulty in raising the money, he found himself balked on all sides by the most deadly inertia. To Marlborough, the Treasurer, and Weston, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he wrote on July 17th that 'delaying answers' would not serve him. On the 27th he was forced to expostulate against their apathy — 'I confess these delays make me impatient even almost beyond patience.'¹

It was becoming increasingly difficult to raise money. Since Buckingham's expedition had set out the French ships had remained in their harbour, and no more funds were to be expected from a repetition of Pennington's piratical raid. The forced loan produced its quota but slowly and grudgingly. Charles even resorted to the disafforestation of large tracts of the country, hoping to gain money from the sale of the timber.

On July 27th Becher arrived in England, dispatched thither by Buckingham to speed up and bring back the necessary provisions. His stories of Buckingham's bravery, and the tremendous personal danger he ran daily, touched Charles to the heart. Frantically he wrote to Weston and Marlborough, not sparing them from veiled threats: 'If Buckingham should fail,' he declared angrily, 'having so bravely and successfully begun his expedition, it were an irrecoverable shame to the King and the nation, and those

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, Preface, p. viii.

that hinder or do not further this action deserve to make their end at Tyburn.'¹ It was proposed that Becher should return as soon as the wind were favourable, with a force of 2000 men and adequate supplies of victuals and ammunitions for Buckingham's army. This, it was hoped, would keep the besiegers going until a further force could be raised which was to be sent under the Earl of Holland. Four days later, Secretary Conway again conveyed the King's peremptory commands to the dilatory Chancellor and Treasurer, 'that order is given for the supply of victuals for the fleet, and that moneys are delivered so that there will be no delay in sending them away'.²

On August 14th Conway was able to inform Buckingham that the officers and troops to be sent under Becher were now ready, and that the King much regretted the slackness of some of his principal officials in the dispatch of these reinforcements. The whole Council had been sharply reproved for the recent dilatoriness, and it was now hoped to have the 2000 men at their rendezvous by August 30th, or at the latest by September 10th. Buckingham had further confirmation of these joyful tidings in a letter from Charles by the same carrier, commending him upon his successful action up to this point, and giving him assurance that a supply of victuals, ammunitions, four hundred recruits and £14,000 ready money would be dispatched under Becher in eight days. On September 10th he could promise faithfully that another two thousand men and more supplies should be embarked at Portsmouth.

The King wrote with more certainty than he could possibly have felt, for it was becoming increasingly difficult to raise the money, whilst the men so hastily impressed often ran away before reaching their destination. On August 23rd Charles again had to write furiously to Marlborough

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 280.

² *Ibid.*, 1627-28, p. 286.

and Weston to speed up supplies of money. Apparently Becher, upon his arrival at Portsmouth, found neither ships, munitions, nor money to meet him as was agreed. The King had thereupon dispatched Holland to find out what was the cause of this further irksome delay. Meanwhile, the wind had turned, so that Becher would have to wait for its favour again before he could set out to the assistance of the unfortunate force at Rhé. On the 27th Conway urged both the Council and the Treasurer to consider that this was no ordinary matter, to be subjected to such checks and counter-checks, and commanded them to proportion their care to the importance of the work. The King was troubled on all sides, so let them not add to his worries.

Two days later Becher forwarded to Charles a despairing letter he had just received from the Duke at Rhé, wondering why he received no succour and informing him that provisions were growing terribly low, and the men decreasing daily. The citadel was still holding out, and he begged Becher to be as quick as possible in bringing reinforcements and supplies. But the unhappy Becher had to inform His Majesty that the fleet was by no means ready, and that the delay had already cost him the opportunity of favourable winds and weather. The wind did not veer until September 16th and it was not until the 25th that he finally arrived at Rhé with the long awaited reinforcements.

A force from Ireland had anticipated him, to succour the besiegers for the time being, but the fortunes of war were steadily going against them. On September 4th, Captain Edward Conway informed his father, the Secretary, that but for Buckingham's great courage and understanding they would all have given up long ago. Dark nights and strong, hazardous winds had worked against them to enable the French to get provisions into the citadel, and if this weather should continue, they would obtain more. 'If

we lose this island,' Edward told his father very plainly, 'it shall be your fault in England.'¹

Becher soon perceived that his arrival had been most urgently required: 'I do esteem it one of the extraordinary blessings of God upon this action,' he wrote, 'that we arrived so opportunely, for if we had stayed longer the whole action would have been in great hazard.'² He found the men, on the whole, fairly confident that they could take the citadel, if only they could prevent further ingress of supplies on the foggy, stormy nights they were experiencing of late. The soldiers were shockingly in need of clothing and provisions. He begged the home government to send stockings, shoes and shirts, with all possible speed, and to encourage merchants to deliver victuals to the troops for which they could give plenty of salt and wine in return.

The elements themselves seemed to be fighting against Buckingham. The violent seas broke down the floating battery he had erected to face the sea front of the fort, and in its place he constructed a strong boom which was again snapped by the beating of the waves. Finally, he had to erect a barrier of hawsers between the ships. To add to the general gloom, Sir John Burgh, Buckingham's immediate subordinate, was killed by a chance shot. At the outset of the campaign, the Duke and Sir John had had a few words, but they had long since been reconciled and Buckingham had found the co-operation of the veteran soldier invaluable. 'The sorrow of the Duke,' observed Sir Edward Conway, 'and the honour he doth in his burial are sufficient encouragement to hazard dying.' The same writer is moved to comment upon the increasing gravity of their position: 'The army grows daily weaker, victuals waste, purses are empty, ammunition consumes, winter grows, their enemies

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 331.

² HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 46.

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grow in number and power, and they hear nothing from England.’¹

Yet the position of the besieged company in the citadel was equally desperate. Very scanty had been the supplies which they had been able to get through, and it is said they were even driven to eating their horses and boiling their hides to make soup. On September 28th Buckingham came within an ace of success. The fortress had only three days’ supplies left, and accordingly dispatched two envoys to the Duke to treat for surrender. These two gentlemen refused to commit themselves on the spot, but demanded until next morning to think it over. A calm, moonlight night would have saved Buckingham, but unfortunately that night was one of the darkest and stormiest they had yet experienced. To the accompaniment of howling winds and raging seas, the Duke manned his boats to go and search for an enemy fleet which was reported to be approaching. The beating winds drove his ships out of their course, and in the darkness and confusion an enemy fleet of thirty-five vessels managed to break through the British lines. The Admiral of this fleet was taken prisoner, together with several others, but fourteen or fifteen ships carrying a month’s provisions managed to get through to the relief of the citadel.

Next day Buckingham made a despairing effort to set the provision ships on fire, but this again failed, and he and his officers faced the gloomy outlook. Could they possibly hold out for another month? Many of the soldiers, in their hunger, had been eating most immoderately of grapes and had fallen ill. Their supplies were still low, they knew not when Holland’s reinforcements would arrive, and meanwhile the French had time to mass an army on the mainland to wipe them out. In face of this disastrous position

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 352.

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the officers advised Buckingham to abandon the siege, which counsel he reluctantly determined to follow.

Rumours of this decision must have alarmed the inhabitants of La Rochelle, who now came forward with belated offers of aid. They would take one thousand of the sick English soldiers into the town and send five hundred men into the camp with supplies of food, and ships to assist in guarding the approach to St. Martin's. This alone might not have tempted the Duke to remain, but he had received certain intelligence that the Earl of Holland would soon be on his way from England, with sufficient supplies to garrison the army safely throughout the coming winter. Buckingham summoned his council of war once more, and, with the exception of one, all voted for the continuation of the siege.

Buckingham has been severely blamed for this decision by those who were of opinion that at this point his position was hopeless. It was most certainly no such thing. Had the home government given him the support he expected, at the right time, he would have been strong enough to repulse the French attack. Richelieu was preparing to send 6000 infantry and 500 cavalry to the island, but he realized that these troops would be hopelessly inadequate should the English reinforcements arrive. He knew that time was to be the crucial factor, and wrote home that should he fail to relieve the citadel before the arrival of the English forces he might as well abandon the attempt altogether.

This seems to be sufficient testimony that at this point Buckingham had still a very good chance of success. In truth, the Duke had not made mistakes in military tactics, as his inexperience might lead us to expect; his chief miscalculation was due to political causes in England which he could not possibly control in his present position. Had

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the 8000 men who were daily expected to arrive under Holland come to time, the French would probably have made no attempt to land their troops on the island. Against a force of such magnitude they would have been powerless. So Buckingham made his decision to accept the offer of the Rochellese, which would enable him to keep going for the time being and to prevent further supplies reaching the fort, pending the arrival of Holland.

Buckingham's relatives in England would, no doubt, have welcomed heartily the news of his abandonment of the whole affair. They had never wished him to hazard his person in such a venture and had used all their efforts to prevent his departure. 'Queen Dido did never more importune Aeneas's stay at Carthage,' writes a contemporary, 'than his mother and sister did his continuance here in London, yea, even with tears, upon their knees.'¹ During his absence his wife was experiencing all the bitterness of despair. 'For my part,' she wrote to him, 'I have been a very miserable woman hitherto that never could have you keep at home. But now I will ever look to be so, until some blessed occasion comes to draw you quite from the Court.'² To add to her troubles, she continued, she had now to face the burden of pregnancy during her husband's absence, and could only pray God to send quickly back to her the being who was the sole blessing of her existence, and whom she adored with such passionate intensity. Her fears for his personal safety, as tales of his great daring poured into England, nearly drove her distracted. To Dr. Moore, a physician who was with Buckingham in the camp, she wrote desperately, begging him to do all he could to prevent her husband landing at La Rochelle: 'I should think myself the most miserablest woman in the world if my

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 180.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 229.

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Lord should go into the mainland, for though God has blessed him hitherto beyond all imagination in this action, yet I hope he will not still run on in that hope, to venture himself beyond all discretion, and I hope this journey has not made him a Puritan to believe in predestination. I pray keep him from being too venturous, for it does not belong to a General to walk trenches: therefore have a care of him. I will assure you by this action he is not any whit the more popular man than when he went, therefore you may see whether these people be worthy for him to venture his life for.’¹

As may be imagined, Buckingham’s mother did not spare him, but rated him very soundly for his folly in attempting so hazardous an expedition with such inadequate resources. ‘My dearly beloved son,’ she wrote, ‘I hope your eyes will be opened to see what a great gulf of business you have put yourself into and so little regarded at home, where all is merry and well pleased, though the ships be not victualled as yet, nor mariners to go with them. As for moneys the kingdom will not supply your expenses, and every man groans under the burden of the times.’ In spite of her scolding, his mother could not prevent her fears for his safety from peeping out at the end of this letter, where she prayed that ‘God hath not, I hope, made you so great and given you so many excellent parts as to suffer you to die in a ditch’.²

Most of Buckingham’s other correspondents at this time reveal a cloying sycophancy, professing themselves his humble creatures, and lauding him in extravagant language. But occasionally a bolder spirit speaks out. On September 21st Sir Robert Pye, Auditor of the Exchequer, told the Duke very frankly that he wished he ‘would advisedly consider of the end and how far his Majesty’s

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 400.

² *Ibid.*, 1627-28, p. 315.

revenues of all kinds is exhausted. We are upon the third year's anticipation beforehand; land, much sold of the principal; credit lost; and at the utmost shift with the Commonwealth'.¹ Sir George Goring, an officer of the King's household, had much the same tale to tell, and begged the Duke to return home, where his presence was most urgently needed to right the confused state of affairs.

The King's affection for Buckingham was daily growing stronger, as he listened to tales of his great bravery. At the end of August he expressed his devotion in the warmest terms: 'Steenie', he wrote, 'Upon all occasions I am glad to remember you and no distance of place, nor length of time can make me slacken, much less diminish, my love for you than that I have any business to advertise you of. I know, too, that this is nothing, it being nothing but what you know already: yet imagining that we (like usurers) love sometimes to look on our riches, I think it not unacceptable to you to bid you look on that I esteem to be the greatest of riches and now hardest to be found, true friendship, there being no style justlier to be given to any man than that to me of being, your faithful friend, Charles R.'²

But all the King's protestations of undying affection for his friend could not effect his salvation in the face of an empty treasury and a rebellious nation. The preparation of Holland's reinforcements was to repeat the same story of wearying delays as that of Becher in August. Buckingham must have strongly doubted Sir Humphrey May's assurance of October 7th that 'the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not a spark, but a flame of fire in anything that concerns the Duke',³ as the time passed and Holland's fleet did not appear. Outwardly, we are told, he betrayed no sign of the despair he was experiencing, but once in the

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 353.

² HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 15.

³ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 375.

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privacy of his own quarters he broke out into bitter and passionate storms of emotion, telling his secretary, Mason, that none of the great affairs he had ever engaged in had disturbed him so much as the fear he now entertained of being abandoned by those at home.

In England affairs were in a shocking state of confusion. Lord Wilmot, a veteran of the Irish wars, was to wait at Plymouth and superintend the shipment of part of Holland's men. Holland himself was at Portsmouth, supervising the levies arriving there. Ships were also to be embarked from the Thames, and it had been hoped that the whole convoy would be gathered together and ready to sail by October 10th. On this very date, the Commissioners at Plymouth had to report the arrival of only 1700 men, whose billeting upon private citizens was occasioning much discontent, and who seized every possible opportunity of creating disorder or running away. Next day Wilmot wrote with the same complaints, deploring the fact that there was still no news of the ships for the Thames, nor had arms arrived with which the soldiers might exercise. On the 12th he received orders from Whitehall to proceed directly to the Isle of Rhé, as quickly as possible without waiting for Holland. The forces were to meet before St. Martin's: Holland was proceeding there straight from Portsmouth.

On the 16th Holland had to report that he had found the preparations at that seaport in a sad state of confusion; there were defects which would take ten or fifteen days to remedy, insufficient mariners, and an inadequate supply of powder and victuals. Meanwhile, the ships from the Thames had only reached the Downs.

The news from Rhé became daily more depressing. Sick and melancholy officers, starving soldiers, exposed half clad to the rigours of winter — well might one of them write

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home, 'pity our misery'.¹ Wimbledon, newly returned from the foreign wars, wrote to Buckingham advising him that if he could not speedily reduce the garrison, he had better abandon the whole affair. The wintry weather was against him, and the French had already had ample time to make strong preparations for the relief. Still the Duke held out, hoping against hope for the timely arrival of succour, and his unfortunate men 'looked themselves and their perspectives blind'² in watching despairingly for the Earl of Holland.

This nobleman had eventually managed to put forth from Portsmouth on October 19th, but already the wind, which had been favourable for the past week, was veering. By midnight he was driven to seek shelter at Cowes, and only narrowly escaped being drowned in the angry seas. Leaving his windbound ships, he managed to reach the mainland and proceeded on horseback to Plymouth, in a frantic effort to join Wilmot and hasten to Rhé with all speed. Alas for his hopes! The wind at Plymouth had also changed, and there was no immediate prospect of embarking upon the voyage. His general depression was strengthened by the discovery that the utmost chaos prevailed at Plymouth. 'There was no officer or creature could tell what there was aboard the provision ships',³ he declared, whilst the arms were painfully inadequate. Meanwhile, a strong sou'-westerly gale was sweeping the Channel and it looked as if the fleet would be port-bound for several days. The crews in the Catwater were eating the victuals which had been provided for the forces at Rhé, but nothing could be done. To the more despondent it looked as if God himself were against them, and had sent this contrary wind to frustrate absolutely all their chances

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 390.

² *Ibid.*, 1627-28, p. 402.

³ *Ibid.*, 1627-28, p. 391.

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of success. On the 27th news reached England that Buckingham had received intelligence that the French King intended to land a large force to occupy the small fort of La Prée. Unless help arrived quickly, they were lost. It seemed that Holland would only arrive in time for the melancholy duty of escorting the Duke back, should he manage to survive the dangers of his present position, which was becoming increasingly perilous.

On October 29th a fair wind deceived the Earl into thinking the storm had ended, and he left the Catwater 'with fine weather and the fairest wind that ever blew'.¹ But the lull in the storm had been cruelly deceptive, and that night a fierce gale arose, which lashed the waves angrily for twenty-four hours. The ships were obliged to put back into port, many of them seriously damaged. Three days after this calamity, a company of 600 newly impressed soldiers arrived at Plymouth, and further evidence of the absolute chaos prevailing amongst those in authority was contained in the fact that no one knew what to do with the soldiers, and the Earl was obliged to support them out of his own purse for the time being. On November 8th, 'having a hopeful wind, a light moon and fair weather',² Holland again set sail, too late now could he but have known it.

As the days had passed, with no sign of the much longed for reinforcements, the company on the Isle of Rhé became more importunate in pressing for a retreat. The end of October was marked by rumours of their abandonment of the siege, but Buckingham, sick to the heart at this seeming desertion by those at home, and knowing full well all that his failure would mean, hung on desperately. The rumours that the French were going to garrison the smaller fortress of La Prée proved only too true. By October 20th there

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 412.

² *Ibid.*, 1627-28, p. 427.

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were nearly two thousand soldiers entrenched in its strongholds, and it was expected that the numbers would increase daily.

It was terrible for Buckingham to be within an ace of success, and then see the prize torn from his grasp. He knew quite well that the force within the citadel of St. Martin's could not hold out much longer, for it was common talk that Toiras had only 500 men left. Yet the Duke could not leave his men, in their present state, open to a rear attack from the French forces in La Prée, and was reluctantly obliged to order a retreat. With the abandonment of despair, he ordered an assault to be made upon the citadel, as a final effort. The attack was made, and the enemy came forth from La Prée two thousand strong to attack the English force in the rear. After an unnecessary massacre, the latter were forced to retreat. Buckingham should now have embarked for home immediately, but his kind heart was touched at the spectacle of the sufferings of the wounded, and the next two days were spent in attending to them and getting them on board ship.

This gave the French ample time to draw up a strong force to attack the retreating army. Buckingham had resolved to withdraw to the small island of Loix — now joined to the mainland of Rhé — and from there to embark. This little island had been joined to Rhé by a small wooden bridge, over which the British soldiers were to pass. There should have been a strong fortification on the Rhé side of the bridge, but by some unhappy chance this side was left entirely undefended, whilst at the point where the bridge joined the island there was a mere handful of sixty cavalry. One of the officers commanding these men comments upon the inadequacy of their numbers, but is quite clear in relieving Buckingham of the direct responsibility for the blunder, declaring that it was 'an error never to be suffi-

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ciently condemned in the Colonel-General and the Sergeant-Major-General, to whom the Duke committed the retreat'.¹ So, with the bridge entirely unguarded at one side, and most inadequately defended at the other, the British forces commenced to cross from Rhé to Loix. Naturally, the French had grasped the position, and, allowing three regiments of British infantry to pass on to the bridge, they charged the 60 horsemen at the other side with a force of cavalry 200 strong. The British cavalry, unable to stand up to so large a force, dashed on the bridge and threw the infantry into a state of hopeless confusion. Meanwhile, a body of French soldiers attacked (from the rear) the regiments which had not yet crossed the bridge. The wholesale carnage which ensued was terrible. Not a soldier crossed the bridge, whilst the officers fell one by one to the butchery of the French. In addition, hundreds of men fell over the sides of the bridge into the water and were drowned. Buckingham did his best to save the situation, staying on the bridge until the very end, and 'carrying himself beyond expression bravely'.² After a while, the French were beaten back, the bridge repaired and the remains of the unfortunate army embarked for England. Many fine officers were lost in the skirmish, including Sir Alexander Brett, Sir Ralph Bingley, and Sir Edward Hawley. Lord Montjoy and Sir Edward Grey were taken prisoners. Altogether, counting the loss from disease, the English forces which arrived at Plymouth in November numbered only about one half of the gallant regiments which had set sail in June. The ill-fated expedition had ended on a note of terrible tragedy.

And yet it is only fair to Buckingham to recognize that, except for the miscalculation over the assault, he had made no tactical blunders. It was more than galling for him to see

¹ GARDINER, VI, p. 197 f.

² *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 428.

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his chances slipping away, day by day, through the neglect of those at home. He was so very near success that it almost seems as if Fate had intervened to stop his victory. The south-west wind which held up Holland in the Channel probably changed the course of our history. Had Buckingham returned home from Rhé victorious, with that valuable island added to our possessions, and the Protestant cause gloriously redeemed, he would have been met by loud popular acclamation, so fickle is the mob. Perhaps his previous disasters would have been forgotten, or at any rate set down to misfortune. Parliament would have met in a patriotic mood, eager to vote supplies and get on with the war, ready to forget the word prerogative. Who can tell? At any rate, although it is interesting to speculate over the possible results of Buckingham's victory at Rhé, there is no need to have to speculate upon the results of his failure.

A proud nation was pierced to the heart by the tales of the disgraceful and unnecessary massacre on the retreat from the island. 'The greatest and shamefullest overthrow the English have received since we lost Normandy',¹ writes a contemporary. Even more galling was the thought that forty British ensigns had been captured and sent to Paris to be set up in Notre-Dame, a symbol of our humiliation. We were a byword on the Continent. To the Savoy Ambassador the French King declared satirically: 'Alack, if I had known my brother of England longed so much for the Isle of Rhé, I would have sold it him for half the money it hath cost him.'² In Paris a French libel declared that though the Duke of Buckingham were not able to take the citadel of Rhé, yet he would be able to take the Tower of London. In London itself a stinging satire was published, entitled, *In reditum Ducis*, commencing

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 281.

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Art thou returned again with all thy faults,
Thou great commander of the ne'er do aughts?

and ending with the ill-applied couplet:

Three things have lost our honour, men surmise
Thy treachery, neglect and cowardice.¹

But whoever might blame him, Buckingham was always sure of the support and approbation of his royal master. A letter from Charles met him upon his landing at Portsmouth, assuring him of the King's constant affection, in spite of his failure to 'perfect his work, happily begun, but, I must confess with grief, ill seconded'. Charles's perfect trust in his friend was demonstrated in the plenary commission he gave him to commence any other designs he might have in mind, with or without a preliminary consultation. In conclusion he reaffirmed the constancy of his devotion: 'With whatsoever success ye shall come to me, ye shall ever be welcome, one of my greatest griefs being that I have not been with you in this time of suffering, for I know we could have eased each other's griefs . . . In my mind ye have gained as much reputation with wise and honest men in this action as if ye had performed all your desires.'²

It was on the evening of November 12th that Buckingham landed at Plymouth, and it is much to his credit that he would not continue his journey until he had seen that his sick and wounded men received adequate attention. They were taken ashore at Plymouth and the rest proceeded to Portsmouth. Altogether there were over a thousand sick men, and Buckingham left £3,500 with Sir James Bagg, the new Vice-Admiral of Devon, that their wants might be supplied.

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1627-28, p. 453.

² HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 20.

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At Plymouth the Duke was met by a special messenger expressly sent by Lord Goring, warning him, if he valued his safety, to avoid the ordinary route up to London. He had received certain intelligence of a plot to kill him on his way back to court. It was not in Buckingham's nature to be daunted by such threats, and he went his way without any undue apprehension, though his retinue was only seven or eight in number, and provided merely with ordinary swords. About three miles outside Plymouth they met an old woman by the roadside, who inquired whether the Duke of Buckingham were in their company. On being assured that he was, she asked to be led to his horse's side, and informed him that in the town which lay next on his route she had heard some desperate men vow his death. She offered to direct him by a safer route, but Buckingham still refused to change his direction, saying that if he once gave way to such fear he would live under it for the rest of his life. He preferred death to cowardice. Impetuously his young nephew, Viscount Fielding, besought the Duke to wear his coat and blue riband until they were through the town, so that the would-be assassins might not know him. The young man, dressed in Buckingham's clothes, would hide his face in a muffler and try to imitate the Duke's deportment. Buckingham's kindly nature was so touched at this demonstration of affection that he caught the boy in his arms and kissed him, but he utterly declined to accept such a sacrifice. Rewarding the old woman for her pains, the company continued their journey untroubled, except for the fact that at the next town a vagrant soldier grabbed the Duke's bridle and hung on to it. He was immediately severed from his hold by Buckingham's attendants, and they galloped quickly through the town.

On the evening of November 17th, Buckingham arrived in London and met Charles, who received him 'most

joyfully and graciously'. They greeted each other with great affection, and the King could not sufficiently reproach himself for his failure to send out supplies in time.¹ Next day Charles and Buckingham held a secret Council meeting, where the Duke gave a faithful relation of the events which had occurred on the island, 'praising all who had worked with him, descending even to the good and bold actions of the private soldiers, as exhibited by the great patience of the army, and the fair opportunity offered of turning their sufferings into glory, if their virtue had been seconded with the powers and succours designed for it'. For his officers he had nothing but the highest commendation. Already his sanguine disposition was reasserting itself, and he forgot his bitter disappointment in the excitement of a new attack he was considering, to be launched against Calais.²

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 289.

² See HARDWICKE, *State Papers*, II, p. 21.

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It was soon evident that the war with France was to continue, for Charles had by now formed an almost fanatical conception that it was his duty to relieve La Rochelle. To the Venetian Ambassador he spoke of his desire to 'give peace to the Huguenots whom, by the last treaty, the French King himself compelled me to take under my protection. He is determined to destroy La Rochelle and I am no less resolved to support it'. Buckingham's language was even stronger. 'The French have no desire for peace,' he declared. 'Let all men beware of treating with them, for they are false.'¹ The suggested attack on Calais was apparently dropped, for we hear no more of it, and all Charles's energies were concentrated upon the problem of relieving La Rochelle. To this primary object the continental war had come to occupy a secondary place — much to the general dissatisfaction. The English armies abroad, under that splendid veteran, Sir Charles Morgan, were fighting a losing battle, but Charles could seemingly contemplate their defeat with equanimity provided he could relieve the inhabitants of La Rochelle.

The popular resentment against Buckingham had reached fever pitch, and attempts upon his life were daily feared. During March, 1628, when the City of London gave a banquet to the Duke and other great personages at court, the streets had to be lined with armed trained bands to prevent any accidents, a thing rarely seen in this country. All manner of wild rumours began to float about, painting

¹ Contarini to the Doge, Jan. 2nd, 1628, *Cal. S. P. Ven.*, 1626-28, pp. 542, 543.

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Buckingham in the blackest possible colours. Men still refused to believe that he had the voluntary support of Charles. There was a general feeling that the King was a good prince could one but get behind the dark shadow of the Duke's influence over him. That Charles had often instigated and always assented to his friend's actions the people could not — or would not — believe. On all sides it was predicted, as if wishing could make it so, that the Duke's retirement from public life and his ruin were imminent. Such rumours were, of course, thoroughly unfounded, and Buckingham was throwing himself wholeheartedly into the preparations for the new expedition to relieve Rochelle. The conditions with which he had to deal were appalling, and there was, as usual, the ever-present dearth of money.

At Plymouth, the few sailors who were left were in a deplorable condition. Their clothes were utterly inadequate for the approaching winter, and they had resorted to stealing and selling the soldiers' guns for ready cash. At Portsmouth, a large body of sailors was ready to march up to Whitehall to demand satisfaction, for they had received no pay for ten months, their clothes were in tatters, and they knew not where to turn. Even worse was the case of the soldiers, for their discontent vented itself upon private citizens. In the absence of sufficient funds to pay their expenses at the inns, they were billeted upon peaceful householders, to whom their conduct was most odious. It is said they wrecked the household goods and the furniture, and even flung their meals into the fire if they objected to them.

There was urgent need of money to pay off these unruly soldiers, and it was estimated that well over £300,000 would be required to set out the fifty ships it was intended to send to La Rochelle. The King was distracted to know which

way to turn to get the money, men groaned beneath the burdens of the times, and on all sides there was a cry for peace with France. Against the bulk of the nation, and even most of the Lords of the Council, Charles and Buckingham stood out for the French war, and continued their frenzied efforts to raise the necessary funds.

There was one method, which might legitimately have been employed in happier times. Parliament alone could vote the necessary money, but Parliament had been summarily dismissed in a very violent mood. And the disasters which had occurred since then augured no good. The King was resolved that only as a last resort would he meet his unruly opponents of the Westminster benches. Most men put it down to a piece of fine acting on Buckingham's part when he fell on his knees and implored Charles to summon Parliament, saying that if he were worthy of death let them not spare him. He may have been sincere enough, for he lived and died in the hope that some day he would be able to win over the people to his cause, and take up his position as their accredited leader.

Desperately Charles summoned his Council to advise him upon extraordinary methods of raising revenue. Someone — we know not whom — suggested imposing an excise upon such commodities as beer and wine, enforcing it by proclamation, the contravention of which would be punishable in the Star Chamber. Buckingham, having by now abandoned his erstwhile enthusiasm for summoning a Parliament, proposed that the King should raise a military force to strengthen his authority. The sum of £200,000 would support a force of 11,000 men, who could be employed by the King for his own uses when they were not required for the foreign wars. Both Charles and Buckingham showed a lamentable misunderstanding of the vigorous insular pride of the nation when they arranged for

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a force of a thousand German cavalry to supplement this standing army. The foreigners would naturally be regarded with suspicion by the English and their introduction only serve to increase popular apprehension. There were rumours that the Germans were being brought over as a special bodyguard for the Duke.

The suggestion to impose an excise was dropped, as likely to cause too much opposition, and for days the Council debated upon this way and that of raising supplies. They all ended in the inevitable conclusion — Parliament must be summoned. Those who had been imprisoned for refusal to pay the loan were now at liberty, so there could be no trouble on that score. The King would make it clear to the assembly beforehand that they were not to resume the attack on Buckingham or they would be peremptorily dismissed. Charles was eventually persuaded to give way, and late on the night of January 30th, 1628, gave orders that writs might be issued for the election of members for March 17th.

Before Parliament met Charles intended that his fleet should be at Rochelle, so that it could not bring about any reversal of his plans. The expedition was to be commanded this time, not by the Duke, but by his brother-in-law the Earl of Denbigh. The scarcity of money rendered the preparations necessarily slow, in spite of Buckingham's personal attention, and the want of organization frequently resulted in the supplies of food going bad and having to be replaced. It was not until the middle of April that the expedition was ready to sail, and even at the last minute many of the sailors mutinied, barricaded themselves in the townhall at Plymouth, refusing to serve unless they receive twenty instalments of pay. They were finally subdued, and the fleet was ready to sail by May 8th. It was not a strong force. Of the fifty-three vessels only nine were of the

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Royal Navy, twenty-seven were armed merchantmen, and the rest auxiliaries. Its avowed object was merely to revictual La Rochelle, and to this end it carried sufficient grain, butter, cheese and salt meat for the maintenance of ten to twelve thousand people for six months. There was a distressing shortage of sailors, so they had to employ soldiers in their stead in many cases. Apparently, no one entertained any doubts that the attempt to succour the town would be anything but successful.

None the less, Richelieu had done his utmost to render the approach of a relieving force impossible. The French, who were besieging Rochelle, were openly of opinion that the English force would be unable to effect its objects, and must needs retire in disgrace. The Cardinal had caused a mole to be erected to blockade the entrance to the harbour. This was yet in an imperfect state of completion. In front of it, he had placed a barricade of large ships, chained together by cables. The ships were provided with light artillery and manned by musketeers, and were intended to make a preliminary firing upon the English ships, after which they were to retire to the mole and the forts. At this point the English would have to pass in single file, to the accompaniment of fire from the mole and the fortresses — 'a hail of shot from every quarter'.¹ Should they manage to withstand this, a further attack would greet them from the banks of the harbour, whilst inside rode the great fleet of eighty large warships, chained together by cables, and practically indestructible. Such were the reports of the French fortifications which reached England. But that there were weaknesses in this apparently fool-proof defence was demonstrated by the fact that small vessels, braving all its dangers, frequently managed to make their way with help for the blockaded town. In spite of the very formid-

¹ Zorzi to the Doge, May 1st, 1628, *Cal. S. P. Ven.*, 1628-29, p. 75.

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able appearance of Richelieu's fortifications, an observer was driven to comment that they would 'never stop anyone determined upon going in, any more than spiders' webs can stop eagles, or nets enchain the winds'.¹ There was a gap of one thousand paces between the ends of the mole, whilst the ships were in reality inadequately manned. They had been stripped of sailors, did not carry their full quota of soldiers, and were deplorably short of guns.

These comforting tidings were not known to Denbigh's fleet, which arrived on May 11th before the mouth of Rochelle harbour. They were completely daunted by the spectacle of apparent impregnability which met their eyes. To enter the harbour seemed to be to court destruction, and the merchantmen were exceedingly loth to risk their ships in such a doubtful enterprise. There was no courage, no confidence, no enthusiasm. Denbigh was a thoroughly incompetent leader, incapable of inspiring his men with a spirit he did not himself possess. The desperate chances which Buckingham had taken at Rhé were quite beyond him. Unwilling to risk an attack on the mole, he gave orders to the ships to weigh anchor, that they might retire to some distance to await events. There were a few Rochellese ships accompanying the expedition, and these, mistaking the orders, thought they were weighing anchor to return to England. The rest of the fleet only too willingly followed their example and, after one of the most ignominious exhibitions in history, the great expedition set sail for home.

It is said that Louis and Richelieu had trembled upon the approach of the British ships and were more than relieved to see them depart. Within the town of La Rochelle, the unfortunate Huguenots, their indignation stirred by this base desertion, lowered the English flags which had floated

¹ Zorzi to the Doge, June 12th, 1628; *Cal. S. P. Ven.*, 1628-29, p. 118.

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proudly from their highest tower and their flagship. In their place they hoisted first a white and then a black flag, to indicate that they would either regain their liberty or die within the walls of the town.

The news that the fleet was on its way home reached Charles on May 19th, just two days after he had sent an order to Denbigh to hold on at La Rochelle as long as possible. His anger knew no bounds, and young Lord Fielding, Denbigh's son, was dispatched to Portsmouth to send the fleet back at all costs, and to press into the King's service all vessels he could lay hands on. Yet, willing though Denbigh was to return, his ships were in no condition to make the return journey, being full of sick men. It was eventually decided that the expedition should be delayed until a strong fleet could be prepared to sail once more under the personal command of the Lord Admiral.

Nor were the fortunes of the English regiments in Germany able to add any brightness to the general outlook. Sacrificed during the whole autumn and winter of 1627 to Buckingham's exploits at Rhé, they had been in a sorry plight. Their staple diet consisted of cat and dog, whilst it was only on the personal credit of the commanders, Anstruther and Morgan, that shoes and stockings were obtained for the unfortunate soldiers. By now the continental war had resolved itself into a series of blockades, and Morgan's men were endeavouring to hold out against Tilly's besieging forces in the town of Stade on the western bank of the Elbe. In spite of the penury and disease amongst the troops, the brave regiments under their dauntless general held out as long as was humanly possible, utterly abandoned by the government at home. But on April 27th even Morgan's indomitable spirit had to face defeat, and Stade was surrendered to Tilly. To such a sorry pass had come the great scheme outlined only four

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years ago, of waging a war in conjunction with the Protestant Princes of Northern Europe for the deliverance of the Palatinate and the salvation of the Protestant cause.

It was in the midst of events galling to the heart of any true Englishman that the memorable third Parliament of Charles assembled. A more illustrious assembly had seldom gathered in the ancient chapel of St. Stephen's. A contemporary declares that the members elected to the House of Commons could have bought the Upper House thrice over, being 'the most noble and magnanimous assembly those walls ever contained'.¹ They were not King's men. A Venetian observes that the nation had uniformly rejected candidates who had even a shadow of dependence on the Court, electing members who had refused to pay the late subsidies and 'who are now everywhere declared good patriots'.² It was an ominous reflection of public opinion. Particularly had the recent elections gone against the Duke of Buckingham. At this time the Duke was Steward of Westminster, and using his influence in this capacity, had twice forced into the representation his agent, Sir Robert Pye. On this occasion, however, Sir Robert's connection with Buckingham made him odious to the constituency. For three days the election waxed fast and furious. The feeble cries of 'A Pye! A Pye!' were overwhelmed with derisive shouts of 'A Pudding! A Pudding!' and Sir Robert was finally defeated by Mr. Bradshaw, a brewer, and Mr. Maurice, a grocer, who carried the day by a majority of over a thousand voices.³ Everywhere the court party was defeated, and Charles must have felt apprehensive as such names as Pym, Eliot, Hampden, Selden, Holles, and Glanville occurred in the returns, for all these men had made their mark at some time in the struggle between King and

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I.*, I, p. 331.

² Contarini to the Doge, March 15th, 1628, *Cal. S. P. Ven.* (1628-29), p. 21.

³ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I.*, I, p. 327.

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Parliament. It is possible that he passed over a name not yet of great importance, but soon to be blazoned in letters of fire upon the annals of our history. For the first time a cousin of Hampden's, returned by the Puritans of the city of Huntingdon, made his appearance on the Commons' benches. His name was Oliver Cromwell.

Four days before the session opened some of the Commons' leaders held a meeting at the house of Sir Robert Cotton. They comprised — as far as we can tell — Eliot, Wentworth, Holles, Pym, Kyrton, Selden, and Sir Edward Coke. The subject of their conference was whether the impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham, so summarily repressed in the last Parliament, should be revived. It was decided, for the present, to refrain from any such attack but to devote themselves to the preservation of their ancient privileges and the reform of the recent abuses which had crept into the body politic. The Commons were meeting in a grim mood, and the struggle was likely to be vital and desperate.

On the morning of March 17th, 1628, Parliament assembled, and the King's speech soon showed the members why they had been called together. Charles had nerved himself well for the coming struggle, and spoke briefly and to the point. His opening sentence touched upon his desire to avoid lengthy argument. 'Now is the time for action', he declared, 'and so I will not multiply words. Following my example, I hope you will decide properly, because time presses and we must not waste it upon unnecessary or rather dangerous things, as long discussions in the present state of Christendom are almost as harmful as deciding nothing.' They had been summoned because of the common peril, and their duty was to vote supplies. Should they refuse, it would become the King's melancholy duty to dissolve Parliament, and resort to

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'other means' — ominous words! With superb self-confidence he assured them that this was no threat, as he would disdain to threaten those who were not his equals, but merely an admonition. After a final appeal for their loyal co-operation, he turned the rest over to the Lord Keeper.¹

If Charles had hoped to frighten the Commons into submission he was disappointed. On Monday, March 24th, it was intended to submit a proposition for supply before the House. But the intrepid members had anticipated the King, and during a long and stormy debate on the 21st the struggle had opened, the Commons taking up the firm position that redress of grievances should precede supply. Seymour declared bitterly that the man who would let his goods be taken from him against his will was no good subject, but a slave. Phelps carried the argument further in ringing phrases: 'If this be law, why do we talk of liberty? Why do we trouble ourselves to dispute about franchises, property, goods and the like?' Coke quoted the passage from a statute of Edward III, 'Loans against the will of the subject are against reason and the franchises of the land'. In vain did Rudyerd plead for moderation: 'Is there no balm in Gilead? If we persevere, the King to draw one way, the Parliament another, the commonwealth must sink in the midst.'² His only answer was a magnificent speech from that great orator Sir Thomas Wentworth, who, in the excitement and enthusiasm of the moment uttered momentous words which were later to rebound with such terrible force upon himself. His wrath grew terrible as he dwelt upon the recent outrages — the impressment of soldiers, the enforced billeting upon peaceful citizens, the unjust imprisonments of loyal subjects for refusals to allow their goods to be snatched from them.

¹ *Lords' Journals*, III, p. 687; RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 476.

² RUSHWORTH, I, p. 501.

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In burning phrases he made his impassioned appeal for the preservation of good government. 'We must vindicate — What? New things? No! Our ancient, lawful and vital liberties! We must reinforce the laws made by our ancestors. We must set such a stamp upon them as no licentious spirit shall dare hereafter to invade them.' He went further when he attributed all the recent evils to 'projectors' who had 'introduced a privy council, ravishing at once the spheres of all ancient government, imprisoning us without banks or bounds'.¹ Here was no revolutionary, seeking to set up new forms of government, but rather one who was ready to devote his life to the preservation of the ancient order of things. His main grievance against Buckingham was that his incompetence had destroyed that orderliness he would fain have seen established in England. He viewed with alarm the introduction of secret councils, which have, indeed, inspired distrust and hatred in all honest Englishmen through the ages. Wentworth had undoubtedly suffered at the hands of Buckingham, but his attack was not a personal one. At this very moment, he would still have been ready to serve his King in the cause of just government. He had never really seen eye to eye with the Parliament men, and even before Buckingham's death was obliged to dissociate himself from them and enter the King's service. But as long as Buckingham lived it was clear that Wentworth would never be able to guide Charles in the path wherein he would have seen him walk.

Sir John Eliot, with his usual impassioned rhetoric, now proceeded to attack the very basis of kingship, and sought to set up the banner of the people, whose liberties he saw at stake. 'Upon this dispute,' he declared, 'not alone our lands and goods are engaged, but all that we call ours.

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 502.

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Those rights, those privileges which made our fathers free men, are in question.¹ Although perhaps he himself scarcely realized it, he was clearly narrowing down the issue to the simple one of King versus People. At the moment he concealed the real issue behind the cloak of Buckingham's power, and affirmed that he was defending the King from an evil councillor no less than the people from injustice and oppression. There was no general conception that the King and Buckingham were one. It was universally believed that only the Duke's evil influence prevented their getting into touch with their monarch. But renew the impeachment they dared not, for Charles had made it sufficiently clear that any such attempt would be followed by an immediate dissolution.

By March 28th the Commons had strenuously contested the King's right to arbitrary imprisonment and arbitrary taxation. Upon the former power Charles was most loth to relinquish his hold. What would happen, he asked again and again, if in times of great peril the King were not allowed to commit dangerous conspirators to prison without revealing his secret causes? This power the Commons had never really questioned, although it was, perforce, included in the general protest. The point was that Charles had misused his prerogative by turning it against his own subjects for his own illegal ends. This was their view of the situation.

The debates on these vexed questions waxed fast and furious. It seemed that the session would never end. The King did not allow the usual Easter recess, the Commons sat all through the normal holiday, and the Good Friday of 1628 was one of the busiest days they had ever seen. All day they argued hotly as to whether subsidies should be given before grievances had been redressed. On April 12th

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 503.

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the King sharply admonished the House to proceed with the voting of money, and was answered two days later by a statement that it was their right to consider grievances first. Subdued by the disheartening news of the foreign wars, Charles did not reply as sharply to this as he might have done a few months before, merely beseeching the Commons to be speedy with their grant of funds ere a foreign foe should take away both his and their liberties for ever.

After fiery debates, in which Buckingham's policy was clearly attacked although his name was not mentioned, it was decided that the vote of subsidies should be accompanied by a petition setting forth the liberties of the subject more clearly than had been done since the days of the Great Charter. The supply offered was a generous one no doubt to sweeten the bitter pill they were asking the King to swallow.

The petition — to be known as the Petition of Right — embodied the four great points that there should be no more arbitrary taxation, arbitrary imprisonment, martial law or billeting of soldiers. On May 10th a Committee of the Lords met to consider the acceptance of the petition, and, except for the clause on arbitrary imprisonment, were agreed to present it to the King without amendment. The resolution against imprisonment, they considered, must be accompanied by the words, 'with due regard to leave entire that sovereign power wherewith your Majesty is invested for the protection, safety and happiness of your people.'¹ Seeing the full implication of this, Buckingham now proposed that this reservation of sovereignty should apply to the whole petition — which would have, in short, the effect of nullifying it. The Lords were not slow to realize this. Rejecting Buckingham's proposal —

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, i, p. 576.

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and incidentally his authority — they endorsed the petition on May 28th.

Had Charles been in less severe straits he would no doubt have refused to consider such a petition. But it was obviously a choice between acceptance and the means to carry on the war against France and a dissolution, whereby he would be compelled to make an ignominious peace. He felt that his honour was bound up in the cause of the Protestants at La Rochelle. They themselves had reminded him that they were reduced to their present straits by the measures of relief they had given Buckingham at Rhé. Charles was determined that Rochelle should be relieved at all costs and to this end gave the petition his attention. His answer was to be given on June 2nd, and it was with deep forebodings that the Commons learnt how Buckingham carried Charles off to his country seat for the entire day on June 1st. The Duke had no desire for the King to assent to the petition as it now stood, and it was probably as a result of their joint efforts that an amazingly meaningless answer was returned next day, making no specific mention of the petition, but merely declaring that it was ever the royal will to do justice according to the laws and customs of the realm.

This tacit ignoring of their petition stirred the Commons to fiery indignation. It was well known to them that Buckingham had used all his powers against it in the Lords, that he had spent the day with Charles before the answer was given and that the Council which had given its consent to this more than ambiguous reply, was of his own choosing. The way was clear before them. No longer would they refrain, in fear, from attacking the King's favourite.

The name of Buckingham must have impressed itself in letters of fire upon the mind of every man who sat at West-

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minster upon this memorable occasion and listened to the impassioned denunciations Sir John Eliot now poured forth against the incompetence of those responsible for all the past disasters. 'The whole kingdom is a proof', he cried. 'What waste of our provisions, what consumption of our ships, what destruction of our men have been! Witness the journey to Algiers! Witness that with Mansfeld! Witness that to Cadiz! Witness that to Rhé! Witness the last! And I pray God we shall never have more witnesses . . . We were never so much weakened, nor had less hope now to be restored.'¹ He did not mention the Duke's name. The impeachment was not to be revived, but he did demand that a Remonstrance on the misgovernment of the realm be drawn up and presented to the King.

Up to the present, the House had retained a simple and loyal faith in Charles himself, imputing all his mistakes to evil counsel. Their consternation was complete when they received a sharp message from the King that they were not to waste their time in any new business as the session was to end in a week, and in particular they were requested not to open any topic which might 'lay any scandal or aspersion upon the State, Government or ministers thereof'.² Even yet the Commons were slow to comprehend Charles's real meaning, to realize that he was against them, that he would stubbornly defend his rights to the last. They still persisted in their bewildered faith in his ultimate virtue, but were openly baffled by their complete failure to get behind Buckingham's influence. Their passion burst all bounds, and one by one these bearded Parliamentarians broke down and cried like children. Such affecting scenes had not been witnessed in the House for many a day. Phelips, in broken phrases, advised that they should all

¹ FORSTER, *Sir John Eliot*, II, p. 246.

² RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 605.

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return home and simply pray for the best, since the King would not listen to them.

The feeling against Buckingham was naturally rising higher every moment, and when Sir John Eliot arose with preliminary remarks on the King's ministers he was instantly silenced by the Speaker, Finch. So upset was the latter by the recent events, that he begged leave to absent himself from the House for half an hour. The leave was granted, and with tears coursing down his cheeks he ran to the King to tell him what had happened.

The Commons had taken advantage of his absence to go into committee to resolve what should be done. Already the bolder members had found fault with those that wept, thinking it more meet to take a courageous resolution against those that were the enemies of the King and the nation. Finally Sir Edward Coke broke the ice. 'I think the Duke of Buckingham is the cause of all our miseries,' he declared, 'and till the King be informed thereof, we shall never go out with honour or sit with honour here. That man is the grievance of grievances. Let us set down the causes of all our disasters and they will reflect on him.'¹

These words must have struck a chill at the heart of Buckingham, who, despite his mistakes and misfortunes, had never relinquished his hopes of vindicating himself before the people and regaining the popularity he had enjoyed for so brief a while during 1624. Already during the second week of April he had made a speech at the Council Table expressing the sorrow he had experienced as the result of the recent events. There can be little doubt that he was sincere, believing quite honestly that all his actions had been undertaken for the good of the commonwealth. 'I must confess I have long lived in pain,' he declared to the Lords of the Council, 'sleep hath given me no rest, favours

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 607.

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and fortunes no content, such have been my secret sorrows, to be thought the man of separation, that divided the King from his people and them from him: but I hope it shall appear they were mistaken minds that would have made me the evil spirit that walketh between a loyal people by ill offices: whereas, by your Majesty's favour, I shall ever endeavour to approve myself a good spirit breathing nothing but the best services to them all.'¹ But if Buckingham could convince himself of his own good intentions, the Commons were enraged rather than conciliated by his attempts at explanation. Loftily Sir John Eliot denied any mere subject the right of mediating between King and People, and the House applauded him vigorously, with cries of 'Well spoken, Sir John Eliot!'²

So it was in vain that Buckingham, hoping to reinstate himself in public opinion, now headed a deputation from both Houses to ask Charles to return a favourable answer to the Petition of Right. Even the acceptance of the Petition, as was to be demonstrated, would not pacify the irate members if unaccompanied by the removal of Buckingham from the King's Council. The Duke was no longer trusted.

Had not the Lords interposed a strong recommendation to Charles to consider the grievous state of this country abroad, there is no doubt that Charles would have answered the recent speeches in Parliament, particularly Sir Edward Coke's, with a summary dissolution. His present straits alone influenced him to give in with as good a grace as possible. At four o'clock on the afternoon of June 7th the King summoned the Commons before his throne to hear his judgment. They were ordered to read their petition, and he promised them a satisfactory answer. It was read,

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 526.

² BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 338.

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and amid loud shouts of acclamation the ancient formula, *Soit droit fait comme est désiré*, was pronounced.

All London burst into mad rejoicings. In the streets of the city the scenes were reminiscent of that memorable occasion when Charles and Buckingham had ridden through the capital like conquerors after their return from Spain. Church bells rang out merrily, whilst that night the town was lit up by bonfires. The joyful news was spread abroad, and as it travelled it gained the colourful addition that the Duke had that very night been sent to the Tower. On Tower Hill a band of youths pulled down the old scaffold, saying they would have a new one built for the Duke of Buckingham. The news travelled westward, and as far as Ware people lit their bonfires and drank to Buckingham's death.

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IF the people had imagined that Charles was ready to throw his friend overboard they were quickly undeceived. 'Steenie' continued to be his constant companion, and the chief in his counsels. The Commons were quick to realize that the continued ascendancy of the favourite more than counterbalanced the acceptance of their Petition. So they proceeded to draw up a Remonstrance, enumerating once more the past disasters and naming the Duke as their cause. 'The excessive power and greatness of the Duke of Buckingham,' it stated clearly, 'and his abuse of the greatness near and about the King, is the cause of all these evils happened to both King and Kingdom.'¹ They demanded Buckingham's withdrawal from Charles's Council. In a modern state this would be equivalent to a vote of lack of confidence. The King, however, quickly demonstrated that he cared little for the nation's opinion, so long as his minister retained his own trust. June 17th was the day appointed for the presentation of the Remonstrance to the King, and on the 16th Charles ordered that all the records of the Duke's mock trial in the Star Chamber, following his impeachment, should be removed, that there might be no stain on his memory.

Perhaps Charles's fear and distrust of the popular feeling had been increased by a recent horrible incident. On Friday, June 13th, a certain Dr. Lambe, a sort of physician and astrologer recently consulted by Buckingham and believed by superstitious folk to be aiding him in nefarious

¹ RUSHWORTH, *Historical Collections*, I, p. 619.

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designs, was leaving a performance at the Fortune Theatre, London. On his appearance a crowd of apprentices began to abuse him loudly, calling him 'the Duke's devil', so that he was obliged to get a guard of sailors to protect him. He stopped at a cookshop where he ate his supper, with the violent crowd waiting outside. As he traced his way to the Windmill Tavern in Lothbury the mob increased in numbers and fury, and finally set upon him with stones. His guard was beaten back, and the enraged crowd beat him down to the ground, battering out one of his eyes. They left him half dead, and no one could be found to give him shelter. He had to be taken to a neighbouring prison, where he died that night. Drunk with rage, the mob openly boasted of the worse fate which would have befallen the Duke himself had he fallen into their hands. They would have minced his flesh, and each had a piece of him. Charles's fury knew no bounds as the news reached him, and he began to regard the opposition to the Duke in Parliament as an excuse for similar anarchy on a large scale. His love for his friend increased in direct proportion to his hatred of the mob. The popular cause gained nothing by the publication of such couplets as the following:

Let Charles and George do what they can,
The Duke shall die like Dr. Lambe.¹

Charles was in a grim mood when, on June 17th, he took his place in the famous Banqueting Hall to receive the Remonstrance. Curtly he told the Commons that such a remonstrance was utterly unexpected, after his recent gracious acceptance of their Petition. He would consider their grievances as they deserved. It is related that Buckingham fell on his knees, beseeching the King to let him speak for himself, but Charles refused to allow this. In-

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 361.

stead, to show his great esteem for his friend, the King gave him his hand to kiss in the presence of his accusers.

Two days later Charles was incensed by a further demonstration of the popular anarchical sentiments. In Coleman Street a constable found a libel affixed to a post, part of which read: 'Who rules the Kingdom? — the King. Who rules the King? — the Duke. Who rules the Duke? — the Devil.'¹ The libellers gave warning to Buckingham to 'look to it', for they intended shortly to treat him to worse usage than they had given his doctor. If the government were not reformed, they professed, they would work the reformation themselves. The King's displeasure was great, and he ordered a double guard to be placed on the watch every night.

It was an age of superstition, when omens and spirit revelations found credence with high and low. Now on all sides began to arise prophecies of the Duke's death. Clarendon devotes pages to a description of how a certain old friend of Buckingham's family was commanded by the apparition of the Duke's father to go up to London and warn him that his death was imminent unless he changed his unpopular tactics. A Lady Eleanor Davis, who professed prophetic powers, fixed his time for August. Worse still, on the day of Lambe's murder, the Duke's picture fell in the High Commission Chamber at Lambeth. His family were all prepared for the worst, and the Duchess seems to have spent her days in a state of terror.

On June 23rd Charles decided to prorogue his factious Parliament, who were even now preparing another Remonstrance, this time to deprive him of his rights to tonnage and poundage. The breach between King and Parliament was complete. Treating this assembly with cool disdain, Charles proceeded to pursue his schemes for the relief of

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 367.

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La Rochelle with the close co-operation of the minister against whom the nation had so loudly protested. The King was ready to identify his friend's interests with his own. Together they would sink or swim. So on Wednesday, June 25th, Charles took Buckingham in his coach to Deptford, riding with him through the principal part of London, 'as it were to grace him'. At Deptford they inspected ten fair ships, rigged ready for the relief of La Rochelle. Upon seeing them, the King was heard to remark to his friend: 'George, there are some that wish both these and thou mightest both perish. But care not for them: we will both perish together if thou doest.'¹

Perhaps it was in a belated attempt to stave off popular criticism that in July the Duke surrendered his office as the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports to Suffolk. His eyes seem gradually to have been opening to the realization that the situation was becoming beyond even his powers of endurance. Although nothing was further from his thoughts than a general peace, he did try at this juncture to curtail the proportions of the continental war. Embassies were sent into Spain to discuss the prospects of a peace with that nation, although the allies were not to be abandoned. It was hoped that Spain might be induced to create fresh difficulties for the French by pursuing certain quarrels she had with them in Northern Italy. This would leave the way clearer for Charles's campaign in North Germany, and at La Rochelle, which he hoped he would soon succeed in relieving.

There was need of all Charles's optimism in contemplating the plight of the unfortunate Protestants in that city, who were now enduring all the worst hardships of a prolonged siege. Grass and roots, shell fish and boiled leather formed their staple diet, and the wretched populace

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 252.

cried out for surrender. Guiton, their iron-willed leader, was only induced to hold on by the knowledge that an English fleet was coming to their aid, under Buckingham, who would brave all hazards to succour them.

Yet the summer months of 1628 had seen the usual chaos and incompetence at Portsmouth, and it seemed likely that the fleet would arrive too late. Sir John Coke wrote to Buckingham that every day whilst the fleet stayed in the harbour it would be less ready and worse provided to set to sea. The victuals and provisions were daily wasting, and the men, partly by sickness and partly by running away, were every day growing fewer.

At the end of July Charles went down to Portsmouth in person to try and bring order into the prevailing chaos. Buckingham was to follow as soon as he could straighten out affairs in London. He found this a most depressing task. On all sides there had been no response to his orders, his officers had lost faith in him and were loth to do his bidding. Despairingly he wrote to Conway, 'I find nothing of more difficulty and uncertainty than the preparation here for this service of Rochelle. Every man says he has all things ready and yet all remains at a stand. It will be Saturday night before all the victuals will be aboard, and I dare not come from hence till I see that dispatched, being of such importance.'¹

The afternoon of the day on which he wrote these despondent lines, Buckingham received a visit from Contarini, the Venetian Ambassador, who had been much disturbed by the heartless suggestion of turning North Italy into a battleground for France and Spain. He came armed with nothing less than the news of an offer from France to treat for peace, forwarded to him by Zorzi, his state's ambassador in that country. Gratefully Bucking-

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1628-29, p. 247.

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ham grasped at the straw which was offered him. Peace with France he would welcome more than peace with Spain. The only drawback was that Louis would enter into no negotiations with the foreigner about his Protestant subjects, and having led them so far England could hardly desert them now. Yet Buckingham saw no reason why Louis should not be induced to treat with the Huguenots directly, and meanwhile the expedition to relieve the town could sail, pending the outcome of negotiations. Perhaps, thought the Duke, he and Richelieu might meet amicably outside the walls of Rochelle to formulate some peaceful solution to the whole problem. That Buckingham intended no treacherous desertion of the Rochellese was evinced by the fact that the relief force was to sail without delay. Should the negotiations prove unsatisfactory, the war would proceed. But his desire for peace with France was sincere enough. He had realized that England had more than enough with the German war, and could no longer carry on military operations simultaneously in two or three parts of the Continent.

By August 17th he was ready to go to Portsmouth and prepare to accompany the expedition. His wife was in a state of pitiable distress, and she insisted this time upon accompanying him to Portsmouth, fearful that this leave-taking might be the last. Even the Duke himself seems to have been more apprehensive than usual. Before leaving London he took the precaution of making his will. To the Bishop of London he spoke very seriously as he bade him adieu, begging him to see that His Majesty always looked after the Duchess and her children. Astonished at such unwonted pessimism the Bishop asked him if he had any forebodings. 'No,' replied Buckingham, 'but I think some adventure may kill me as well as another man.'¹ On the eve

¹ WORTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Miscellany*, v, p. 319.

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of his departure Sir Clement Throgmorton thought fit to give him a word of warning: 'Were it not better,' he said, 'that your Grace wore a privy coat or secret shirt of mail?' 'It needs not,' replied Buckingham, 'there are no Roman spirits left.'¹ It was the fury of the mob he feared most, perhaps recalling the ghastly details of Lambe's murder.

After his arrival in Portsmouth he nearly fell a victim to this very fury, for on August 22nd as a condemned sailor was being led to execution, there was a general rush on the part of his comrades to save him. Buckingham, followed by an armed guard, rode quickly to the scene, and was perilously near being lynched by the infuriated mob. But his guard staved off the attack, the crowd was driven back, and the sailor executed. Encircled by soldiers, Buckingham rode back to his lodging in the high street, suffering severely from the nervous shock of his adventure. For the rest of the day he was indisposed and remained indoors. The King, who was staying with Sir Daniel Norton at Southwick, about five miles outside Portsmouth, came over to visit him that afternoon. The meeting was more affectionate than ever, and as Charles finally arose to depart, Buckingham embraced him passionately, as though he divined in his inmost soul that they were never to meet again.

Meanwhile, trudging along the dusty roads to Portsmouth in the heat of the August sun, might have been seen a foot-sore traveller who seemed to be goaded to his efforts by some inward enthusiasm. Occasionally he secured a lift from some waggoner, but for the most part he had to walk. On the morning of Tuesday, August 19th, he had left the house in Fleet Street where he lodged with his mother, to set off on his desperate mission. He had taken the preliminary measure of sewing into the lining of his hat a

¹ WOTTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Miscellany*, v, p. 319.

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paper on which he had set forth clearly the reasons for the deed he now contemplated, for he knew that he might never live to give them afterwards. 'That man is cowardly, base, and deserveth not the name of a gentleman or soldier that is not willing to sacrifice his life for the honour of his God, his King and his Country. Let no man commend me for doing of it, but rather discommend themselves as the cause of it, for if God had not taken away our hearts for our sins he would not have gone so long unpunished. Signed, John Felton.'¹ At a cutler's shop on Tower Hill he bought a dagger-knife for tenpence, which he sewed in its sheath in the lining of his right inner pocket, since his left hand was maimed. This would enable him to draw it easily with his one good hand. These preparations completed, he had set off on his weary journey, leaving his name to be prayed for at a church in Fleet Street on the following Sunday. He was a man of morbid religious passion, given to much reading and brooding, who had gradually come to see in himself a divinely selected instrument of vengeance. As a soldier he had served under the Duke in the expedition to Rhé, and his failure to secure a lieutenancy, for which he had petitioned him, had added to his more general discontent. He did the seventy miles tramp from London to Portsmouth in four days, and entered the high street a little before nine on the morning of Saturday, August 23rd, the eve of St. Bartholomew.

At that time there stood in the high street a long, low irregular building two stories high, belonging to a Mr. Mason, which had been fitted up for Buckingham and his attendants. The bedrooms of the house opened on to a long gallery which traversed the entire length of the hall. The bottom of the gallery stairs communicated with the breakfast and sitting-rooms by means of a short dark passage.

¹ BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, i, p. 387.

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The night before, Buckingham's sleep had been troubled by strange dreams, and on this particular morning he awoke in such a state that the Duchess had ventured to remonstrate with him, begging him to withdraw a little from public affairs and be more cautious. At first he was rather inclined to be harsh with her, but later relented, kissed her fondly and said he would take her anxiety as a sign of the great love she bore him. His natural good spirits apparently reasserted themselves, and, according to the testimony of Lord Dorchester, who had just arrived with a message for the Duke to join the King at Southwick, he came down the gallery stairs into the breakfast-room 'in the greatest joy and alacrity I ever saw in him'.¹

In the breakfast-room he was met by Soubise and a company of Huguenot officers, who had come over to urge the necessity of speeding up the relief expedition to La Rochelle. In the general excitement which prevailed both inside and outside the house, no one noticed a short, squat figure, in travel-stained clothes, who made his way through the crowd and concealed himself behind one of the heavy velvet hangings in the narrow passage between the hall and the breakfast-room. As the company breakfasted news was brought in — false, as it was afterwards ascertained — that Rohan had managed to relieve La Rochelle from landwards. The Duke was more than delighted, and took little heed of the excited Frenchmen who, with violent gesticulations, protested that the news was altogether too impossible to be true. Buckingham hastily left the table to enter his coach which was already waiting at the door to convey him to Southwick. He was more impatient than ever to get to Charles, now that he had received such joyful news. Still followed by the excited Frenchmen, he passed from the breakfast room, and as he stood in the narrow passage one

¹ *Cal. S. P. Dom.* (Charles I), 1628-29, p. 271.

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of his colonels, Sir Thomas Fryer, a small man, came up to speak to him and the Duke stopped to listen. Felton, who was waiting behind the curtain, seized his opportunity and drove his knife with terrible force through Buckingham's left shoulder, piercing his heart. The Duke had just enough energy left to pull out the knife and lay his hand on his sword, crying, 'The villain hath killed me', before he staggered against a table and, the blood gushing forth from his nose and mouth, sank heavily to the ground. At first his companions thought it was a stroke of apoplexy, but soon they perceived that the great Duke was dead.¹ Only three days ago he had celebrated his thirty-sixth birthday.

A scene of indescribable tumult followed; there were shouts and cries and lamentings, says Carleton, every man drawing his sword to slay the murderer and none knowing where to find him. Thinking that the excited gesticulations of Soubise and his friends had been threats, some set up cries of 'A Frenchman! A Frenchman!' and Felton, thinking he heard his own name pronounced, stepped forward calmly saying, 'Here I am'.² He could easily have escaped in the general tumult, but, proud of his deed, scorned such cowardice. He was saved from the fury of the crowd by Carleton and a few others who took him prisoner to be conveyed to London.

A more piteous scene was being enacted in the house itself. The body of the Duke had been carried on to a table, in the hall, and then deserted. 'There was not,' says Wotton, 'a living creature in either of the chambers, no more than if it had lain in the sands of Ethiopia.'³ But the silence was soon rent by the most distracted shrieks from the gallery overhead. Lady Anglesea, Buckingham's

¹ WOTTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Miscellany*, v, p. 320; ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 261.

² *Ibid.*

³ WOTTON, 'Life and Death of George Villiers', *Harleian Miscellany*, v, p. 320.

sister-in-law, who was staying with them, had witnessed the recent scenes of terror and confusion and had had the melancholy duty of telling the poor Duchess that the hour she had so long dreaded was here at last. The stricken lady rushed out in her nightdress on to the gallery from where she saw the bleeding body of him whom she had loved more dearly than life itself. 'Ah, poor ladies,' wrote Dorchester, who, attracted by the screams, witnessed the scene, 'such was their screechings, tears and distractions, that I never in my life heard the like before and hope never to hear the like again.'¹

Meanwhile Captain Charles Price had saddled his horse and ridden post-haste to Southwick to convey the dreadful tidings to the King. Charles was at morning prayer when the messenger arrived and whispered the news in his ear. His face instantly clouded with signs of the deepest emotion, but, like one dazed by a nightmare, he concluded his prayers in the normal manner. Once in his own room he awoke to reality, and throwing himself upon the bed burst into passionate tears, stricken to the very heart at the loss of his dearest friend. There can be little doubt that at this bitter moment King Charles and his people were alienated beyond any hope of reconciliation. Between them would always be the spectre of his murdered friend, of whom he afterwards spoke as 'his martyr'. These feelings were strengthened as he heard how the public had received the news with joyful faces, and openly drunk the murderer's health in the streets.

On September 10th, 1628, the mortal remains of him who had been the most powerful man in England were quietly and privately interred in Westminster Abbey.² In

¹ ELLIS, *Original Letters*, Series I, vol. III, p. 256.

² Charles feared that the mob might even now attempt to seize the Duke's dead body, and so had the funeral carried out in private. At ten o'clock next night there was a sham ceremony, with much pomp and unseemly noise to deceive the populace. See BIRCH, *Court and Times of Charles I*, I, p. 399.

ASSASSINATION

Henry VII's chapel, reserved at one time for none but anointed kings, one of the greatest of royal favourites found his final resting place. In the dark days ahead Charles was to have many a faithful servant, but never again one who was so dear to him as his well-beloved Steenie.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The Domestic State Papers for this period have all been calendared, those for James I by M. A. Everett-Green, 4 vols., London, 1857-59, with addenda vol. 1580-1625, London, 1872; those for Charles I by J. Bruce, 22 vols., London, 1860-1921, with addenda vol. 1624-49, London, 1879. These contain much valuable information upon Buckingham's career, and in the reign of Charles I especially his name appears upon almost every page. But many of the entries — especially in the calendars for James I — are merely headings, no attempt having been made to reproduce them in detail. *The Calendar of Venetian State Papers*, ed. by H. F. Brown and A. B. Hind, London, 1900-25, is much more illuminating, serving to throw valuable light upon Buckingham's part in the Spanish marriage proceedings, the negotiations for the French marriage, and the breach in Anglo-French relations which followed. The remarks of the Venetian ambassadors are of extreme interest and provide a lively commentary upon many of the chief episodes of the reigns.

The chief official records of the proceedings in Parliament are the *Journals* of the House of Lords and the *Journals* of the House of Commons. These give full accounts of the business transacted in the Houses, though scanty records of words spoken by members. But the rule of secrecy was, fortunately, broken by one or two clerks, so that we have valuable notes of the Parliamentary proceedings during many of these years. For the House of Lords there are 'Notes of Debates in the House of Lords (1624-26)', taken by Henry Elsing and Robert Bowyer, ed. by S. R. Gardiner,

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Camden Society, 1879, and 'Notes of Debates in the House of Lords, 1621, 1625, and 1628', again taken by Elsing and Bowyer, ed. by F. H. Relf, *Camden Society*, 1929. These volumes contain copious notes describing the debates in the House of Lords, of which our only other record is a chance allusion in some contemporary letter. For the House of Commons there are 'Proceedings and Debates in 1621', from the pen of E. Nicholas, pub. Oxford, 1776, and 'Debates in the House of Commons in 1625', ed. by S. R. Gardiner from notes taken by Richard Knightley, M.P., *Camden Society*, 1873. For the impeachment of Buckingham and the trial of Bristol we have 'Documents Illustrating the Impeachment of the Duke of Buckingham in 1626', ed. by S. R. Gardiner, *Camden Society*, 1889, and the 'Defence of the Earl of Bristol', ed. S. R. Gardiner, *Camden Miscellany*, vol. VI, 1871. The first volume of *Historical Collections*, by John Rushworth, London, 1721, provides a valuable store of state papers, speeches in Parliament, and pamphlets loosely gathered into a slight narrative. Rushworth was a barrister and occupied many official positions. He had access to valuable information, and his reproduction of documents is, in the main, trustworthy. Reports of speeches and proceedings in Parliament are also given in the *Parliamentary History of England*, ed. by William Cobbett, London, 1806-20.

A store of information, to be used carefully, is found in contemporary letters and chronicles. Valuable letters, many of them actually addressed to Buckingham, and throwing light on his career, are printed in Cabala, *Sive Scrinia Sacra, Mysteries of State and Government*, London, 1691. There is a wealth of interesting correspondence, furnishing important details on court life and political events in *Court and Times of James I*, 2 vols., and *Court and Times of Charles I*, 2 vols., by Thomas Birch, ed. by R. F. Williams, London,

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1848. These consist mainly of the detailed and entertaining newsletters of J. Chamberlain and J. Mead. Other letters, including many of those of James I and Charles, as Prince and King, are printed in *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ed. by Sir Henry Ellis, London, 1825. *Miscellaneous State Papers*, from 1501-1726, ed. by P. Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, 2 vols., London, 1778, are very valuable, containing many of the letters of James I to Charles and Buckingham, and of Buckingham to both Charles and James. The correspondence of Bristol and of Carlisle, printed here, is also of great importance. The *Hardwicke State Papers* have been found invaluable in dealing with the negotiations for the Spanish marriage and the French marriage, and provide many interesting letters of first rate importance describing the events on the island of Rhé. Important correspondence between Buckingham and Sir Francis Bacon is printed in the *Letters and Life of Sir Francis Bacon*, vol. vi, ed. by J. Spedding, London, 1839. Dr. Godfrey Goodman's *Court of King James*, London, 1839, combines chronicle and letters in two valuable volumes giving much interesting correspondence from the Duchess of Buckingham to her husband, together with other letters to the Duke of an intimate character.

The contemporary biography of Buckingham is a slight work, reprinted from an original MS. of thirty pages, entitled 'A Short View of the Life and Death of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham', by Sir Henry Wotton, in *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. v, London, 1810. It contains much interesting detail, and is particularly useful for the story of Villiers's early years and for the full account of the journey of Charles and Buckingham to Spain in 1623. *The Autobiography of Sir Simonds d'Ewes*, 2 vols., London, 1845, is one of the more valuable diaries of this period, though the Puritan views of the writer must be borne in

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mind. The first volume of *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, London, 1826, throws interesting light upon Buckingham's career and gives a very just estimate of his character. It is frequently at fault, however, in points of detail, since the author wrote much of it from memory some time after the occurrence of the events described. *Scrinia Reserata*, a Memorial offered to the great deservings of John Williams, D.D., by J. Hacket, in two parts, London, 1693, is an admiring biography of Archbishop Williams, giving valuable information upon his relations with Buckingham, but tending to emphasize unduly the part played by Williams in most of the events. Sir Anthony Weldon's *Court and Character of King James*, London, 1650, is, for the most part, too scurrilous to be of value, and such stories as are taken from it need to be treated cautiously. 'Aulicus Coquinariae', in *Secret History of the Court of James I*, ed. by Sir Walter Scott, Edin., 1811, is an answer to the above and similarly unreliable; whilst Peyton's 'Divine Catastrophe of the House of Stuarts', also in Scott's *Secret History*, needs approaching more than gingerly. A more reliable chronicler is Arthur Wilson, whose interesting 'Life and Reign of James I', is printed in vol. II of Kennet's *Complete History of Great Britain*, London, 1706. Letters, rare pamphlets, and several curious MSS. are hung upon a thin narrative in *Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James I*, ed. by J. B. Nichols, London, 1828, whilst Somers's *Tracts*, London, 1748-52, has, in its earlier volumes, one or two descriptive pamphlets bearing upon this subject.

'The Narrative of the Spanish Marriage Treaty', by Fray Francisco de Jesus, trans. by S. R. Gardiner, *Camden Society*, 1869, is a valuable account of the negotiations connected with the Spanish Marriage Treaty. Francisco de Jesus was a Carmelite friar who took an active part in the

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theological discussions, possessed important official documents, and from them drew up his valuable record. The story of Buckingham's famous amour with the French Queen is described in the *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, Paris 1885. Bassompierre's embassy to England in 1626 is described in the *Ambassade du Maréchal de Bassompierre en Angleterre*, Cologne, 1688. The Cadiz voyage of 1625 is fully related in 'The Voyage to Cadiz in 1625', by J. Glanville, secretary to the admiral, *Camden Society*, 1883. The story of the proceedings on the island of Rhé (which are also described very fully in the *Domestic Calendar*) is told by Edward Herbert, Baron of Cherbury, in 'The Expedition to the Isle of Rhé', ed. by the Earl of Powis, *Philobiblon Society*, London, 1860. Both these accounts are of great value as coming from an actual eyewitness.

Of the secondary authorities the most valuable commentary for this period is, without doubt, S. R. Gardiner, *History of England* (1603-42), London, 1893. Professor Gardiner visited Spain to study the documents relating to the Spanish marriage negotiations, and his information on this subject is voluminous. He conducted his investigations with tireless industry, and his History is of great value to all students of this period. There is an interesting article on Buckingham in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and another, going into more detail, in the *Biographica Britannica*, vol. vi, London, 1747.

The Biography of Sir John Eliot, by John Forster, London, 1864, though rather uncritical, contains many important speeches and other valuable information throwing light on the relations between Buckingham and Sir John Eliot. Lavissee provides a very satisfactory *History of France*, which helps to elucidate Anglo-French diplomacy for this period, whilst several valuable letters throwing light on Buckingham's foreign policy are printed in the *History of France*, by

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E. E. Crowe, London, 1863. The most useful general histories for this period are *England Under the Stuarts*, by G. M. Trevelyan, London, 1925 (revised ed.), and the *History of England, 1603-1660*, by F. C. Montague; *Pol. Hist. of England*, vol. VII, London, 1907.

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